THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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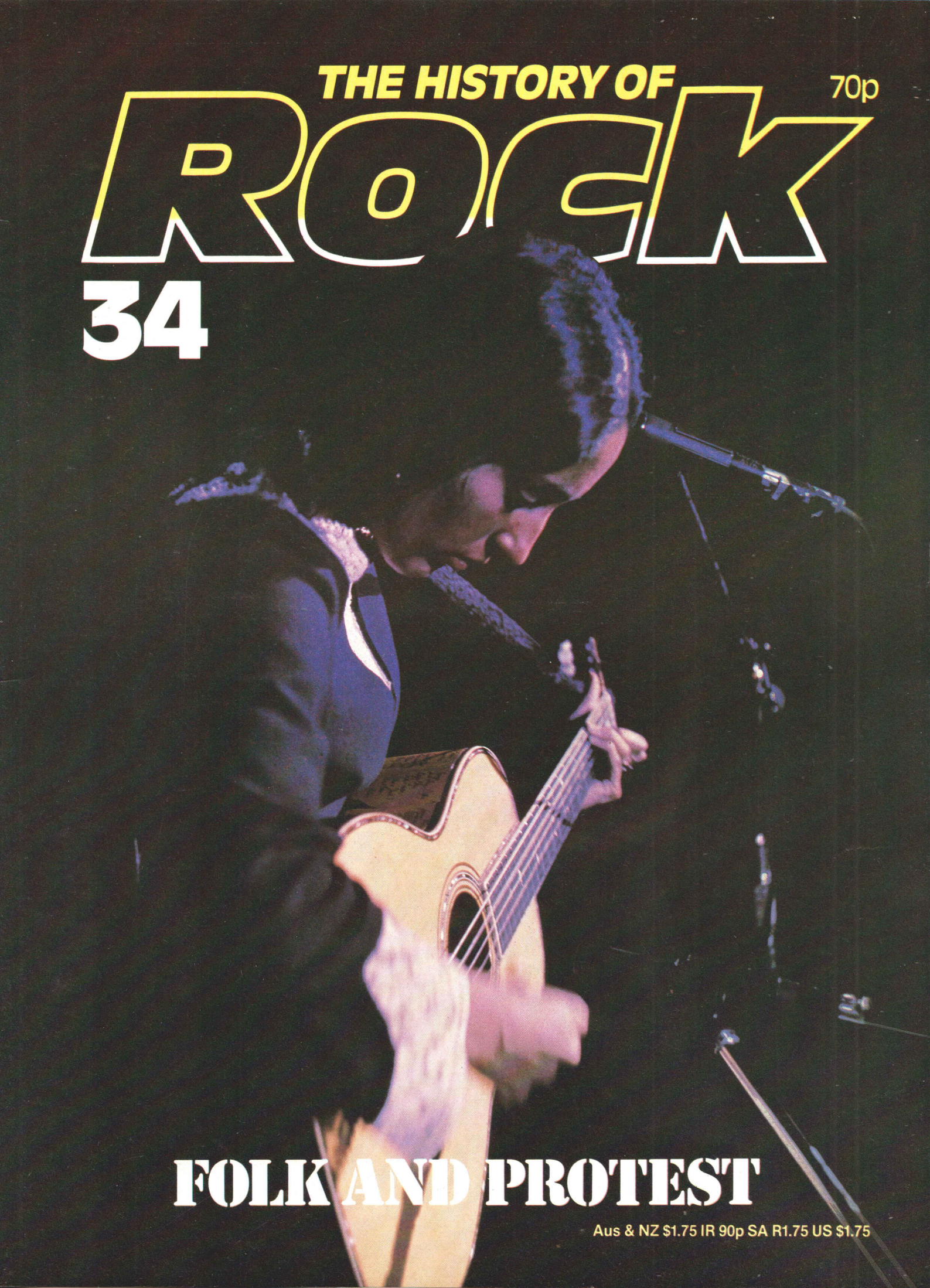

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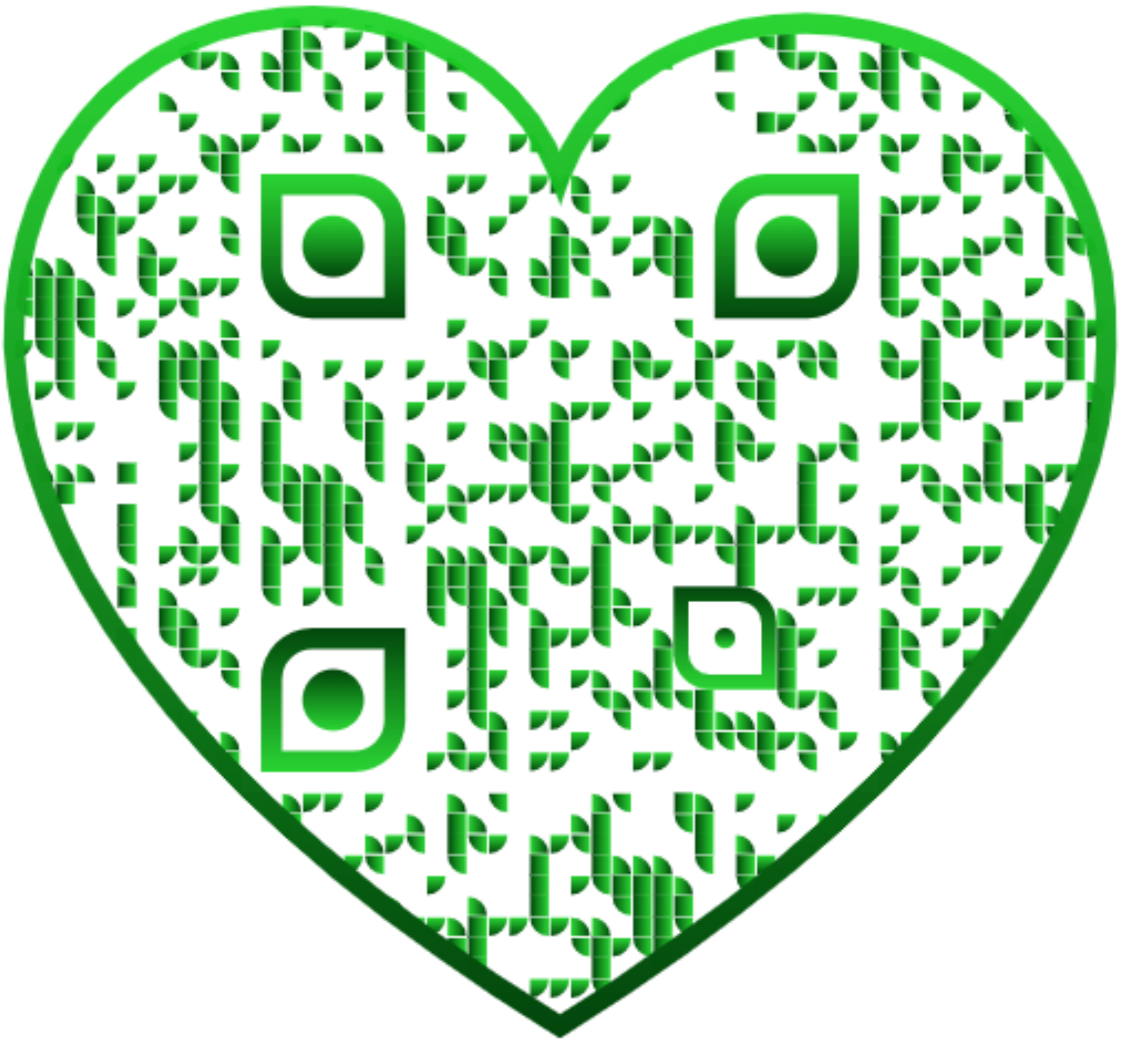

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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In complete contrast to the rock 'n'roll explosion of the previous decade, the mid Sixties saw the United States very much the also-rans of the rock world. The Beatles had opened up a lucrative new market for UK groups to exploit, and soon groups like the Zombies and Herman's Hermits were riding high in the *Billboard* charts. The Zombies' scholarly approach to their music contrasted strongly with the music-hall leanings of Herman's Hermits.

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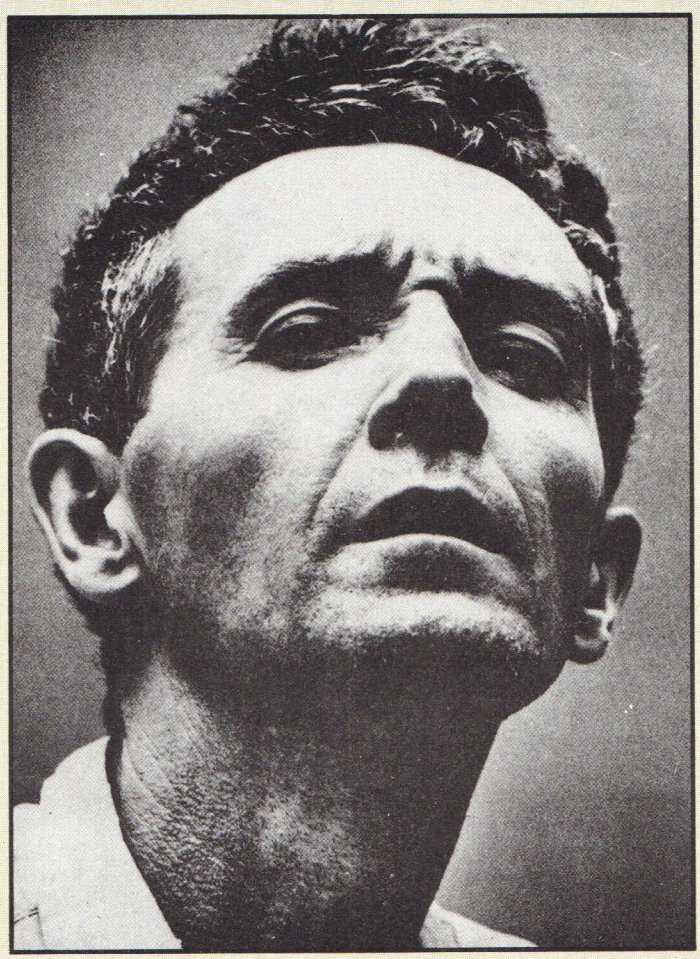
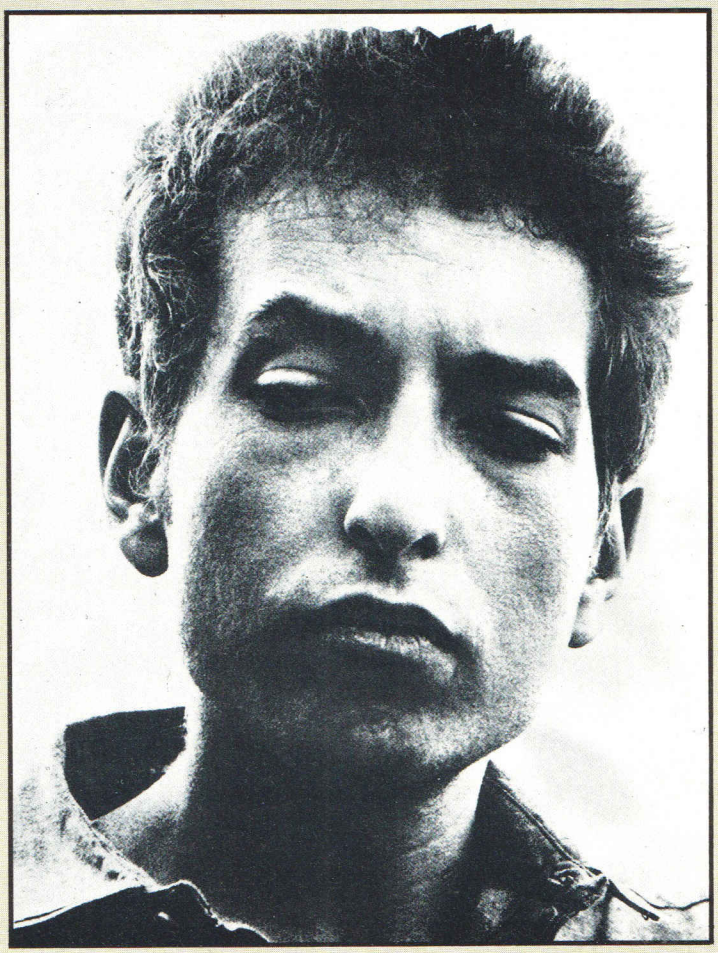
The Sounds of the Campus

How the folk tradition entered the mainstream of rock





Woody Guthrie (above left), America's foremost folk balladeer, was a powerful inspiration for Bob Dylan (above right). Guthrie knew the hardship of the Depression and led a freewheeling and energetic life, travelling the continent, singing its old songs and writing new ones in praise of the land and its 'plain folk'. Dylan reflected a similar breadth, but his most moving compositions – angry observations on civil rights and the Vietnam War – eloquently expressed the frustations of America's disaffected youth of the Sixties.

In November 1958, the Kingston Trio reached Number 1 in the American charts with 'Tom Dooley'. This signalled the beginning of a folk boom that would last for five years and during which dozens of major artists of the Sixties and Seventies – including Bob Dylan, Simon and Garfunkel and Roger McGuinn of the Byrds – would set out on their careers as part of the folk song movement. The folk influence was to lead to an expansion of the subject-matter of rock lyrics to include social and political issues, and give birth to one of the most successful strands of 'progressive' rock: the singer-songwriters.

The folk revival of 1958 to 1963 had its roots in an earlier upsurge of interest in folk music in America, which reached a peak with the 'Grapes of Wrath Evening' at the Forrest Theatre in New York in March 1940. This event, held in aid of the John Steinbeck Committee for Agricultural Workers which existed to raise funds for the low-paid grape-pickers of California, featured Leadbelly and Woody Guthrie, the two greatest folk singers of the period.

Leadbelly was the nickname of Huddie Ledbetter, a black sharecropper whose musical talents had been 'discovered' in 1933 by New York song collectors John and Alan Lomax at the Angola State Prison Farm in Louisiana where he was serving 10 years for assault with intent to murder. The Lomaxes, father and son, persuaded the State Governor to commute the sentence and brought Leadbelly north, where he was immediately a sensation among the then-few folk-song enthusiasts. He had a strong, compelling voice and a powerful style on 12-string guitar, but most of all he had a vast repertoire of songs, many of which later became folk 'standards'. These included 'Midnight Special', 'Rock Island Line', 'Goodnight Irene', 'Pick A Bale Of Cotton' and 'Black Betty'.

Woody Guthrie, a white musician from the dustbowl of Oklahoma, was equally prolific, composing over 1000 songs before his death in 1967 from the degenerative nerve illness Huntington's chorea. Guthrie's best-known compositions also remain anthems of the folk movement; among them are 'Pastures Of Plenty', 'This Land Is Your Land', 'So Long, It's Been Good To Know You' and 'Deportee', a moving lament for the Mexican immigrant victims of a plane crash. As well as providing

them with songs, Woody Guthrie gave the young enthusiasts of the Forties a style of life as well of singing. He was a wanderer, a bohemian and a radical, and as such was to be an inspiration to the young Pete Seeger and, later, to Bob Dylan.

Almanacs and Weavers

In 1940 Seeger was a shy 20-year-old who had dropped out of Harvard University; he was later to become the key figure linking the folk movement of the Forties with that of the Fifties and Sixties. Like Woody, Pete Seeger was fervently left-wing in his political persuasion and the two were soon to form part of the Almanac Singers, a group which toured the country giving concerts to trade union and political audiences.

The characteristic folk event of the time, however, was the 'hootenanny', a kind of free-for-all concert attended by numerous performers where the audience was expected to join in too. By the postwar years, the steady growth of interest in folk music fostered by performers like Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger led to the involvement of the major record companies in the folk world. The immediate object of their attention was the Weavers, a singing group formed in 1948 by Seeger. Theirs was a more polished sound than that of the Almanac Singers, and the repertoire was less directly political. They were signed to Decca in 1950 and proved hugely successful with such releases as 'Goodnight Irene' and 'On Top Of Old Smoky'.

In 1952, however, the career of the Weavers was brought to an abrupt halt by the power of the blacklist in the US entertainment industry. The blacklist contained the names of artists suspected of pro-communist sympathies, and strong pressure was put on theatre owners and radio and television stations not to employ them. Such was the height of anti-communist feeling in the United States at the time that being named on the blacklist could mean virtual ruin for a performer. For the Weavers it meant a return to the smaller world of the folk scene, notably the college campus, where they continued to tour throughout the Fifties.

It was from those campuses that the next phase of the folk movement sprang when two students at Menlo Park Business College, Bob Shane and Nick Reynolds, teamed up with Dave Guard, a former schoolmate of Shane, to form the Kingston Trio. Taken from Kingston, Jamaica, the group's name reflected the current popularity of calypso music.

Coached by their manager Frank Werber, the Kingston Trio came up with even smoother harmonies than the Weavers, so that their singing style owed as much to cabaret singers like the Four Freshmen as it did to the folk tradition. But their initial repertoire was traditional, including the old mountain ballad 'Tom Dooley', which they took to the top of the Hot Hundred at the end of 1958. In the wake of the Trio's success came numerous other campus-type folk groups such as the Cumberland Three, the Chad Mitchell Trio, the Gateway Singers, the Limeliters, the Tarriers, the Brothers Four, the Babysitters and a host of others as well.

Not everybody enjoyed the smooth approach of the folk groups, however. The old guard of the folk world, many of whom had expressed disquiet at the 'compromises' with pop music made by the Weavers, were outraged by what they regarded as the travesty of folk music presented by the Kingston Trio and the rest. Commenting on a Kingston Trio record in the pages of the folk magazine *Sing Out!*, one of the folk purists wrote: 'This album brings good folk music to the level of the worst in Tin Pan Alley music, and is even worse because it is advertising itself as folk music.'

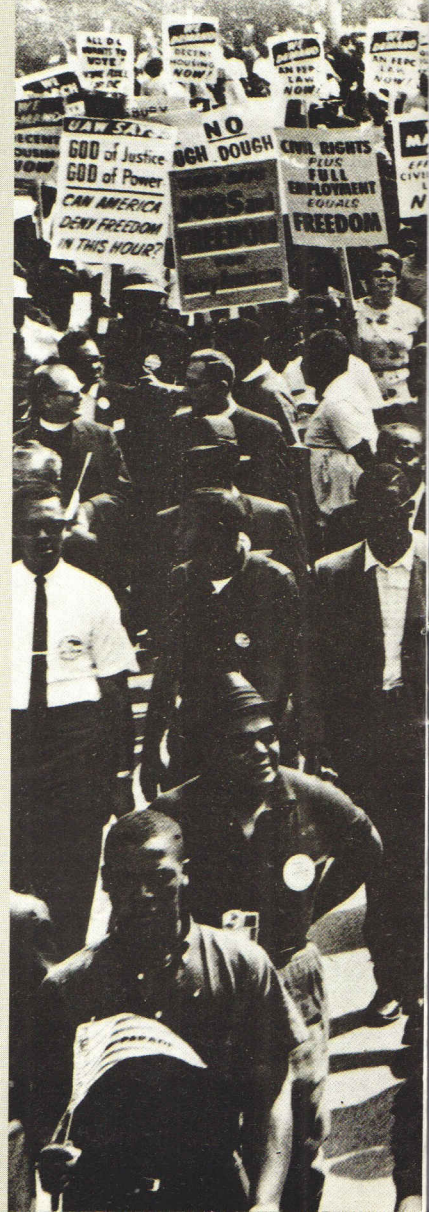
However justifiable this criticism was from the lofty standpoint of the folk tradition, it underestimated the level to which 'Tin Pan Alley music' had fallen by 1959. The heroic era of rock'n'roll was over and mainstream pop music was dominated by banal Philadelphia music, in which puppet-like singers were made teenage stars more through their looks than their talent. In this situation, keen young musicians turned elsewhere to find something challenging to play and thus many future rock stars first performed as folk group members: John Denver's first professional job came when he replaced Chad Mitchell in the Chad Mitchell Trio, while Byrds Roger McGuinn and Gene Clark were with the Limeliters and New Christy Minstrels respectively.

Village voices

There were, nevertheless, many young performers in the folk revival of whom all but the most diehard purists approved. These included the 'straight' singers of traditional songs and the new breed of protest and political songwriters. Along with the remaining musicians of the Pete Seeger generation, these made up the bill of the showcase of the folk revival, the Newport Folk Festival, an annual event which started in 1959. The hit of the first Newport Festival turned out to be Joan Baez, the most popular of the straight singers of the traditional repertoire. Other young women with a command of Scottish ballads and American mountain songs were Judy Collins, Buffy Sainte-Marie and Carolyn Hester. Also favoured by the guardians of the folk movement were young instrumentalists dedicated to re-creating the sound of the country blues or of white rural music. Prominent blues players included Spider John Koerner, Tony Glover and Dave Van Ronk, while the New Lost City Ramblers led the way among country bands.

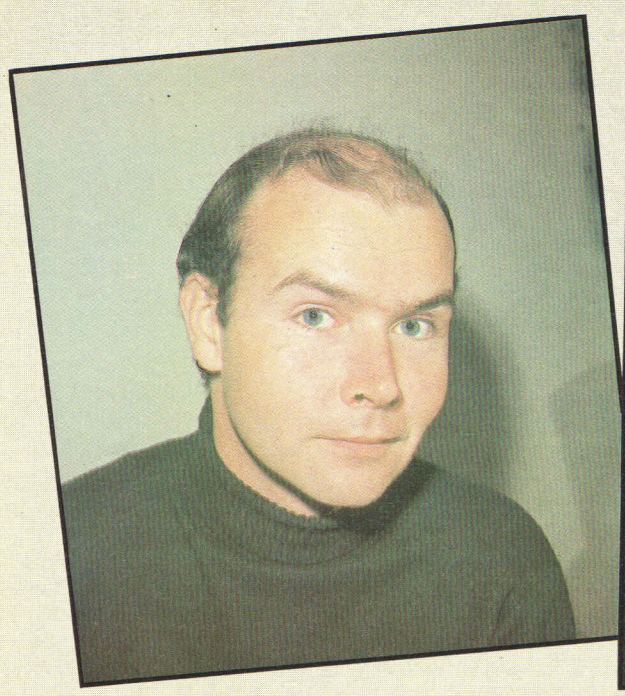
Unlike the Weavers or the Kingston Trio, however, these performers failed to appeal to the general pop music audience, although the college folk following of Baez in particular was, by the beginning of the Sixties, extremely large. What made an impact in the wider world of popular music were the compositions of the young protest singers, the most notable of whom was Bob Dylan. As a student in Minneapolis, Dylan had followed the popular folk trend typified by the Kingston Trio until someone introduced him to Woody Guthrie's recordings and writings. From that point Dylan became obsessed by Guthrie and travelled to New York to join the folk scene in Greenwich Village and to visit his hero who lay dying in hospital.

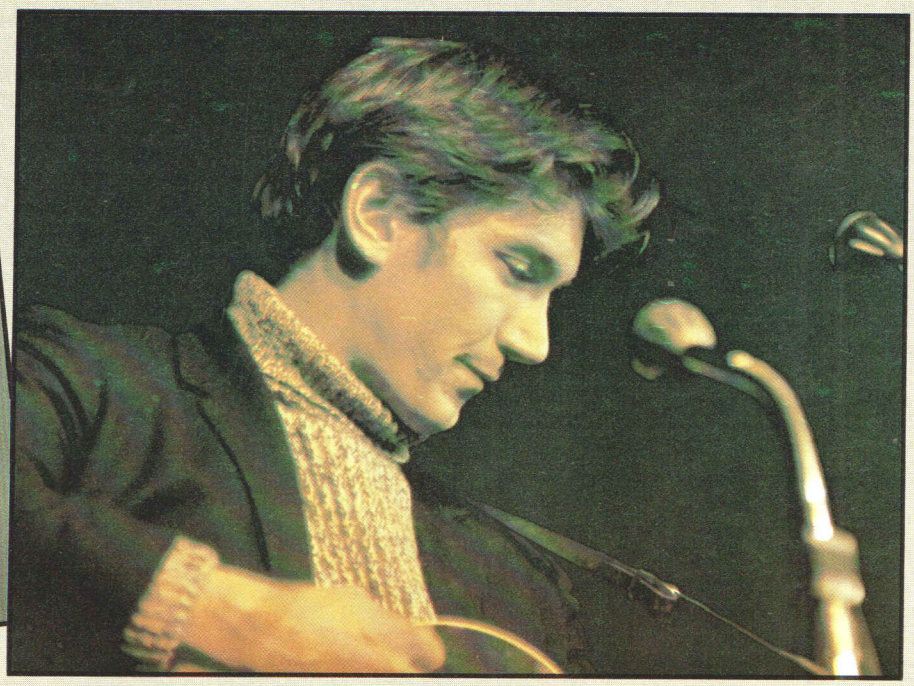
Woody Guthrie's songs provided the main



Above: Leadbelly (Huddie Ledbetter), a rare, authentic voice in American folk, wrote many classic songs. Below: The 1963 civil rights march in Washington. Inset: Confrontation at Berkeley.

Pete Seeger formed the Almanac Singers (above, with Guthrie at left), who specialised in political songs, and then the Weavers (left), who had a wider repertoire and enjoyed chart success.





Tom Paxton (above) and Phil Ochs (above right), two of the more overtly political folk campaigners, carried their message to campuses throughout the US. Dave Van Ronk (below) re-created the country blues sound. His singing of 'House Of The Rising Sun' was a revelation for Dylan. Peter, Paul and Mary (below right) provided a slick, professional act that appealed to students and the record-buying public alike.

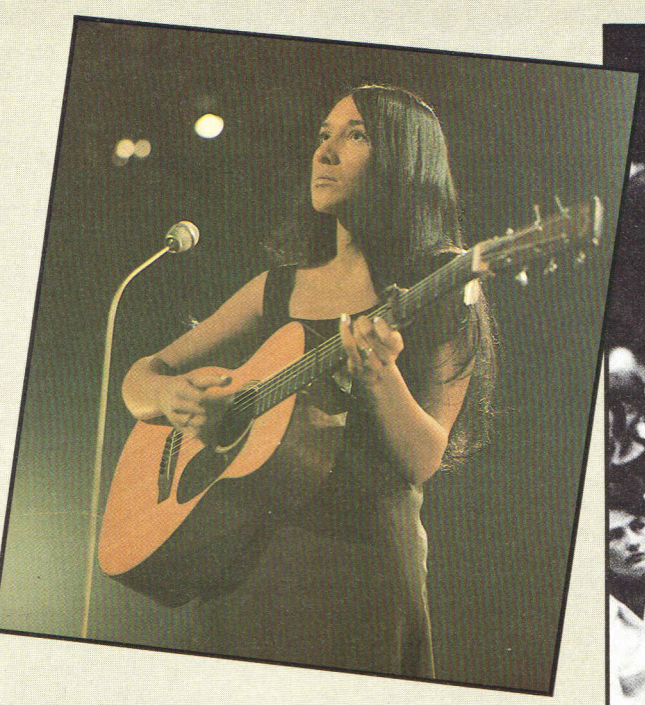
model for the topical material turned out by Dylan and by his fellow protest composers Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs and Eric Andersen who responded, in song, to the political issues and events of the time, notably the movements for disarmament and for black civil rights in the Southern states of America. In August 1963, 200,000 civil rights marchers filled Washington, led by the Reverend Martin Luther King; and from the platform Bob Dylan sang his own song 'Pawn In Their Game', Joan Baez sang the gospel song 'We Shall Overcome' and Peter, Paul and Mary sang Dylan's 'Blowin' In The Wind'.

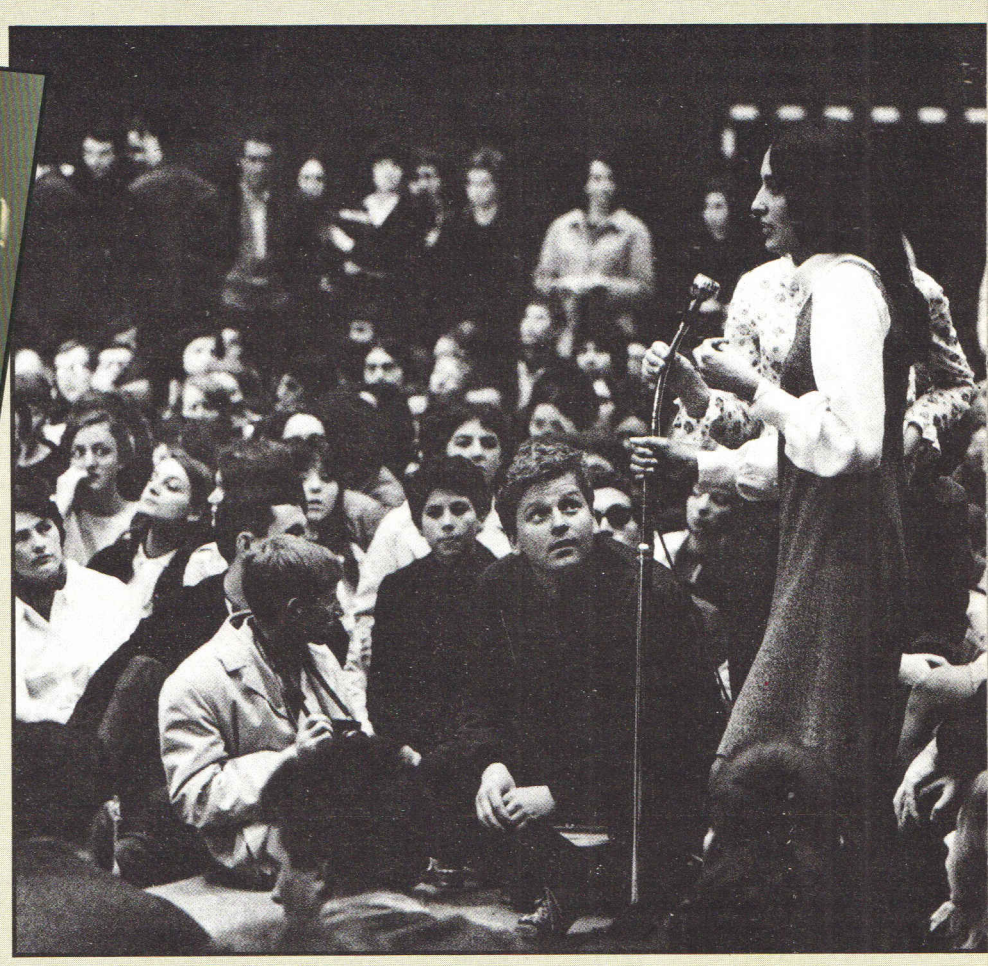
Puff and protest

Peter, Paul and Mary had been artfully brought together in 1961 by Albert Grossman (later to become Dylan's manager) in order to bridge the gap between the campus folkies of the Kingston Trio type and the more purist music of the folk scene. With the beards of Peter Yarrow and Paul Stookey and the long blonde hair of Mary Travers, the group presented a less conventional appearance than the Kingston Trio, and yet their sound was that of an orthodox campus trio. Their repertoire mingled conventional folk tunes (such as 'If I Had A Hammer') with children's songs ('Puff The Magic Dragon' – though this was to be denounced as a 'drug' song) and Bob Dylan material; the follow-up to the million-selling 'Blowin' In The Wind' was 'Don't Think Twice, It's All Right', a Dylan song that also reached the US Top Ten.

In terms of general popularity, Peter, Paul and Mary's 1963 success was to be the high-point of the folk revival. Afterwards, the folk scene began to fragment for two principal reasons, one musical and one political. Musically, the arrival of the Beatles and other groups from Britain showed that electric beat music could offer more than the Philly teen idols and many performers, Bob Dylan included, went on to develop varying forms of folk-rock, a mixture of the two idioms. In the political sphere, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in November 1963 dampened the mood of optimism about peaceful social change which the songs of the protest singers had mirrored. The next few years were marked by America's growing military involvement in Vietnam and by the repression of student demonstrations at Berkeley and other colleges.

Nevertheless, a folk scene of some vigour continued, even if its overall impact was diminished. The more politically-concerned singers like Joan Baez, Phil Ochs and Tom Paxton continued to compose and tour the campuses. For even younger musicians, folk still offered a viable musical apprenticeship and nearly all the major bands of the San





Francisco hippie era had folk origins.

Elsewhere, the coffee houses and concert halls of the folk world were the first home for a different kind of songwriter from the protest singers of the early Sixties. Their songs were more introspective, involving a 'change in the personal pronoun from "we" to "I"', as Josh Dunson, one of the old guard political folk enthusiasts wrote disapprovingly. Chief among these writers were Paul Simon, Tim Hardin and, later, Joni Mitchell, who came to the New York folk scene from Canada in 1967. The best of Paul Simon's early songs, like 'I Am A Rock' and 'Kathy's Song' were reflections of a state of personal crisis or alienation far removed from the certainty of viewpoint in protest songs. Tim Hardin, unlike Paul Simon, failed to fulfil the promise of his early records, which contained intense love songs like 'Hang On To A Dream', 'Don't Make Promises' and 'Reason To Believe', a UK Top Twenty hit for Rod Stewart in 1971.

Many performers who came to prominence in the Seventies – such as Maria Muldaur, James Taylor, Jackson Browne and Woody Guthrie's son Arlo – owed much to the Sixties' folk movement. But perhaps the most enduring legacy of the folk revival for the rock scene was an attitude of self-consciousness that stemmed from the keen anti-commercialism of the folk world. One pretentious statement that nevertheless exemplified this attitude appeared in the sleeve notes of *Peter, Paul and Mary*: 'In your hand you hold their first album. But to be more accurate, you hold a bouquet of song as fresh as the earth, and strong with the perfume of sincerity.'

That perfume was later to pervade such events as the Monterey Pop Festival of 1967 and the famous Woodstock Festival of 1969, mixed of course with the less sweet smell of money-making. Yet the rock scene inherited from folk at least the idea that sincerity and integrity in artistic expression were desirable aims. And thus the folk revival did much to free the rock world from the constraints of Tin Pan Alley.

DAVE LAING

Buffy Sainte-Marie (above left) drew, in the main, on the traditional repertoire, as did Carolyn Hester (below). Joan Baez (above), mixed trad and politics to become a star of the campus circuit.

JOHNNY APPLESEED

Pete Seeger spread the word throughout America

During the Fifties, Pete Seeger contributed a column to the American folk magazine *Sing Out!* under the heading 'Johnny Appleseed Jr'. This name referred to an American pioneer who travelled widely, planting seedlings and encouraging settlers to establish orchards for themselves. Seeger saw his own life in parallel terms: as a folk singer sowing socialist ideals and increasing his audiences' awareness of social injustice. Nor was he unsuccessful; for his 'career' as singer and political activist in the Forties and Fifties directly inspired younger performers such as Joan Baez and prepared the way for the folk revival in the early Sixties.

During the Fifties, Seeger gave thousands of concerts on college campuses throughout the USA. It was a time when an alliance of musical fashion and the blacklisting of left-wing entertainers had all but eliminated folk music from radio, television and the record industry in America. Among the students he sang to were many who would later form the groups that led the popular revival in folk.

Left and below: Pete Seeger sings out at the Newport Folk Festival, which he helped inaugurate in 1959. Opposite: The Weavers, who pioneered the commercialisation of folk in the Fifties.

Seeger recalled this period in 1961. 'For many years I figure I pursued a theory of cultural guerrilla tactics. . . . I kept as home-base this one sector of our society which refused to knuckle under to the witch-hunters: college students. Now, I figure, most of my job is done. The young people who have learned songs from me are taking them to thousands of places where I myself could never expect to go.'

Advice from Woody

Seeger was born in New York City on 3 May 1919. His father was a professor of music with a special interest in folk, and his mother played the violin. When he was 16, Pete was taken by his father on a folk-song field trip to North Carolina. They attended a square-dance and ballad festival where Pete 'fell in love with the old-fashioned five-string banjo, rippling out a rhythm to one fascinating song after another'. The banjo was the instrument on which he became most skilled.

After high-school days he was sent to Harvard, but dropped out in 1938. The distress and dislocation he witnessed among ordinary people during the Depression had aroused in him a passionate concern for the rights of working men and women and clinched his conversion to radical socialist views. What he really wanted to do, Seeger decided, was to be a folk singer; and folk singing would enable him to wage his own campaign.

Seeger attached himself to his father's fellow folk-song collectors, notably John and Alan Lomax; he also met authentic folk musicians, among them two of the most celebrated – the itinerant balladeer Woody Guthrie, seven years older than Seeger, and the Negro folk and bluesman Leadbelly (Huddie Ledbetter), then in his fifties. Guthrie travelled through the United States, worked as a labourer and involved himself in union politics wherever he went. His influence on Seeger was profound.

'Pete,' said Woody, 'you ought to see what a big country this is.'

'How do you do it if you don't have the money to travel?' asked the naïve New Yorker.

'Well, use the rule of the thumb – if you can't hitch-hike, ride a freight train.'

So Pete Seeger completed his apprenticeship as a folk musician by travelling around the USA, playing for what he could earn in bars and on the streets. By the time he returned to New York in 1941 he was ready to embark on the next phase of his career.

With Lee Hays, the teacher son of a Methodist preacher, and Millard Lampell, a writer, Seeger formed the Almanac Singers, a product of the last gasp of the pro-communist folk-song movement of the Thirties. They sang around New York City, for automobile workers in Detroit, for dockers in San Francisco – whoever wanted to hear them. In the early part of the Second World War the Almanacs sang 'peace' songs but supported the war effort

once the Soviet Union joined the Allies in June 1941. After Pearl Harbor, Seeger signed up and spent much of his time entertaining US troops.

On top of the charts

The Almanac Singers were little known outside political and union circles, but the next vocal group that Seeger founded broke into the commercial world of pop music and achieved international fame. That group was the Weavers, formed in 1948. Its members were Seeger, Hays, Ronnie Gilbert and Lee Hellerman. In Seeger's words, the group comprised 'two low baritones, one brilliant alto, and a split tenor (namely me)'.

The Weavers breathed new life into American folk music at a time when it seemed on the point of suffocation by postwar affluence, urban society and slick entertainment. They sang songs from the USA, Africa, Israel and Latin America; they re-created traditional songs with fresh arrangements, and wrote entirely new ones. Their flexible approach was reflected in their singing, too: each member took solos (although Seeger's dry tenor lacked weight) and their lusty two- and three-part harmonies over guitar, recorder or banjo produced a vibrant warmth. In concert especially, they conveyed the fervour and joy of a revivalist meeting.

The group were spotted by bandleader Gordon Jenkins and signed to the Decca label. Their first record, 'Goodnight Irene'/'Tzena, Tzena, Tzena', released in 1950, was astonishingly successful and sold over two million copies. 'Goodnight Irene', a wistful Leadbelly song adapted by John Lomax, remained at Number 1 in the US charts for 13 weeks. There followed 'On Top Of Old Smoky', Seeger's arrangement of a traditional American song, and 'Kisses Sweeter Than Wine', with Weavers lyrics to a Leadbelly tune. Both were million-sellers.

Then came 'Wimoweh', a composition by South African Solomon Linda, based on a Zulu chant about a dead chief whose spirit lives on: 'The lion is sleeping, the lion, the lion.' The Weavers' recorded version was notable for Seeger's anguished falsetto and Jenkins' brassy exclamations. As 'The Lion Sleeps Tonight', the song went to Number 1 for the Tokens in 1961 and Tight Fit in 1982.

The Weavers gave wide currency to many other songs, and used material from a variety of sources. The group minus Seeger adapated 'Michael Row The Boat Ashore' (a worldwide hit for the Highwaymen in 1961) and 'House Of The Rising Sun' (which went to Number 1 for the Animals in 1964). 'Guantanamera' (1961), with verses by Cuban poet José Marti and music adapted by Seeger, provided a Top Ten hit for the Sandpipers in 1966.

In addition, Seeger wrote such folk standards as 'Where Have All The Flowers Gone' (1957), inspired by three lines of a Ukrainian poem, and 'If I Had A Hammer', co-written with Lee Hays in 1949 and a Top Ten hit for Peter, Paul and Mary and also Trini Lopez in the early Sixties. 'Turn! Turn! Turn!', based on verses from the Book of Ecclesiastes, was composed by Seeger in 1962 and gave the Byrds a US Number 1 in 1965.

Travelling on

The career of the Weavers was dramatically halted in 1952. In the climate of paranoia that existed in America at the height of the Cold War, the group found themselves on a blacklist of entertainers with 'suspect' political views. Dates were cancelled and bookings dried up. They were back performing four years later, but Seeger was convicted of contempt of Congress – although the verdict was quashed on appeal in 1962 – and the group could not regain their former impetus. Seeger quit in 1958 to go solo and the Weavers disbanded at the end of 1963.

By then, groups like the Kingston Trio and Peter, Paul and Mary had made an impact on the charts. Seeger welcomed the new sounds, although he criticised the excesses of the commercialised folk craze. He refused to take sides in the row between purists and modernists; as his own career has shown, folk is for him a living music capable of adaptation.

Although Seeger has recorded more than 50 albums, it is as a live performer, casual and intimate, that he excels. He has neither a strong voice nor a commanding presence, yet he succeeds in concert through his engaging good humour and his devotion to folk in all its forms – a commitment that has never wavered in over 40 years of song.

DAVE LAING

Pete Seeger
Recommended Listening

Pete Seeger's Greatest Hits (Columbia PC 9416) (Includes: Little Boxes, Wimoweh, Where Have All The Flowers Gone, Turn! Turn! Turn!, Talking Union, We Shall Overcome, Which Side Are You On); *The Weavers Greatest Hits* (Vanguard VSD 15/16) (Double album that includes: Kisses Sweeter Than Wine, Tzena, Tzena, Tzena, On Top Of Old Smoky, Rock Island Line, Goodnight Irene, This Land Is Your Land, House Of The Rising Sun, Michael Row The Boat Ashore, If I Had A Hammer, So Long It's Been Good To Know You).

FOLK GOES POP

Did the Kingston Trio bastardise the music?

THE KINGSTON TRIO were well-scrubbed, collegiate beach-boy types; the complete antithesis in look, sound, personality and values of the blue denim and social concern which typified American folk culture. While they carved out a place in mainstream pop taste for songs of various folk traditions – Southern Appalachian, Calypso and urban topical – they also stood for a type of commercialism that the 'purists' in the American folk movement disdained.

The music of the Kingston Trio can almost be regarded as a form of acoustic-rock; the emphasis was firmly on ultra-smooth vocal lines, but the percussive, lively drive of the group gave many of their arrangements a bright, cheerful, almost-danceable texture. By any standards the music was simple and one-

dimensional, but their clean-cut image – candystriped shirts, crewcuts and acoustic guitars – inspired many imitators.

The Kingston Trio were formed casually in 1957 and played in bars before they graduated to the Purple Onion, a San Francisco club well-known for showcasing popular new acts of a collegiate vein. The leader, Dave Guard, was born in Honolulu in 1934. He was a student at Stanford University's School of Business Administration when the group was formed. Bob Shane was born in Hawaii in the same year, and had befriended Guard at Punahou High School; both played the ukulele. While studying at the Menlo Park Business College, Shane met the third member of the group, Nick Reynolds (born in San Diego in 1933).

Three guys together

When the three finally got themselves that one-week residency at the Purple Onion, they reportedly packed the place with friends. They were granted top billing at the club within a month, and continued to play there for a further eight months. The Trio cut is first album in January 1958 on the Capitol label, and 'Tom Dooley', a track released five months later as a single, became an enormous, surprising hit around the world. By November 1958, five months after its release, 'Tom Dooley' stood at Number 1 in *Billboard*'s Hot Hundred. The record's universal popularity – it eventually sold more than three million copies – saw the group on the road nearly every working day of the following year.

This traditional American murder ballad had been collected by Frank Warner from the singing of Frank Proffitt, a folk singer from North Carolina. Warner had recorded the song for Elektra in 1952, and this was probably how the Kingston Trio first heard it. The single provoked both positive and negative reactions within the US folk movement. Some traditionalists felt it was a 'rip-off' because no credit or royalties went to Warner or Proffit. (The song had heretofore been in the public domain.) On the other hand, the success of 'Tom Dooley' showed the potential for 'songs of the people', and impelled many in the folk scene to start forming similar acoustic trios and quartets – such as the Journeymen, the Brothers Four and many more.

The Trio's reception at the first Newport Folk Festival in the summer of 1959 was indicative of the split in the folk audience that was to dominate the folk revival in the Sixties. Because the group were hitmakers, many fans came to the festival to hear the Kingston Trio. But the purists – those dedicated to the tradition of homemade earthy music – found the group something of a distortion of their view of what folk music represented.

None of this prevented the Kingston Trio from making album after album of their bouncy, light and inconsequential music. The group recorded a total of 30 albums before they broke up in 1968. Some observers, however, would regard the end of the Kingston Trio as having occurred in 1961, when Dave Guard left because of personality clashes with his partners. He went on to form the Whiskeyhill Singers, a group patterned loosely on the earliest of popular folk groups, the Weavers.

Above right: The Kingstons in the studio (from left, Guard, Shane and Reynolds). Inset right opposite: The same group on TV. Inset left opposite: The 1961 group with John Stewart (front left) replacing Guard. Opposite: The new group onstage in the late Sixties.

Guard was replaced by John Stewart, who had previously written such songs as 'Green Grasses' and 'Molly Dee' for the Trio. Guard's departure marked the end of a major phase for the Kingston Trio, but by then their influential role in popularising a sound based on guitar, banjo and congas had been established. The most successful of their emulators had been the Highwaymen, who scored a Number 1 hit with the Trio-styled 'Michael' in 1961 and the Brothers Four, who had a worldwide million-seller with 'Greenfields' the year before.

Chart adaptations

The career of the Kingston Trio would probably have been totally uncontroversial had they not crossed swords with fans of traditional folk. Although they included many political radicals among their numbers, these folk purists were musically conservative. In defence of their free adaptations of folk material, Dave Guard said: 'When we find something we like, we adapt it. It may not be ethnic when we get through with it, but . . . why should we try to imitate Leadbelly's inflections when we have so little in common with his background or experience?'

The Trio's Hot Hundred history, which started so successfully with the chart-topping 'Tom Dooley' in 1958, lasted until late 1963 when 'Ally, Ally Oxen Free' crawled to Number 61. Seventeen entries were achieved, all on the Capitol label, the next most successful being 1963's 'Desert Pete'. With eight hits registered after Guard's departure – the Trio were absent from the chart throughout 1961 – his replacement by the deep-voiced Stewart led to no immediate decline in popularity. However, the advance of newer folk-rock artists such as Peter, Paul and Mary (championed by manager Albert B. Grossman and initially patterned on the Trio's style) was to relegate the group to relative obscurity by the mid Sixties and precipitate their break-up.

John Stewart was to sustain a successful solo career after a slow start. His acoustic-based albums of the early Seventies, such as *Wingless Angel* and *The Lonesome Picker Rides Again*, endeared him to a cult audience, but it was not until he signed to RSO Records and teamed with Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks of Fleetwood Mac at the end of the decade that he achieved major success with a tougher, more 'electric' sound. The 1979 single 'Gold' made the US Top Five, while the album from which it was taken, *Bombs Away Dream Babies*, was also hugely successful.

Ultimately, the success of the Kingston Trio was very much tied up with their first release. 'Tom Dooley' was instrumental in bringing folk music to a larger audience, and marked a transition from the more traditional and overtly political style of the Weavers to the Dylan covers and AM harmonies of such groups as Peter, Paul and Mary. It was for their subsequent influence, rather than their own music, that the Trio will be remembered.

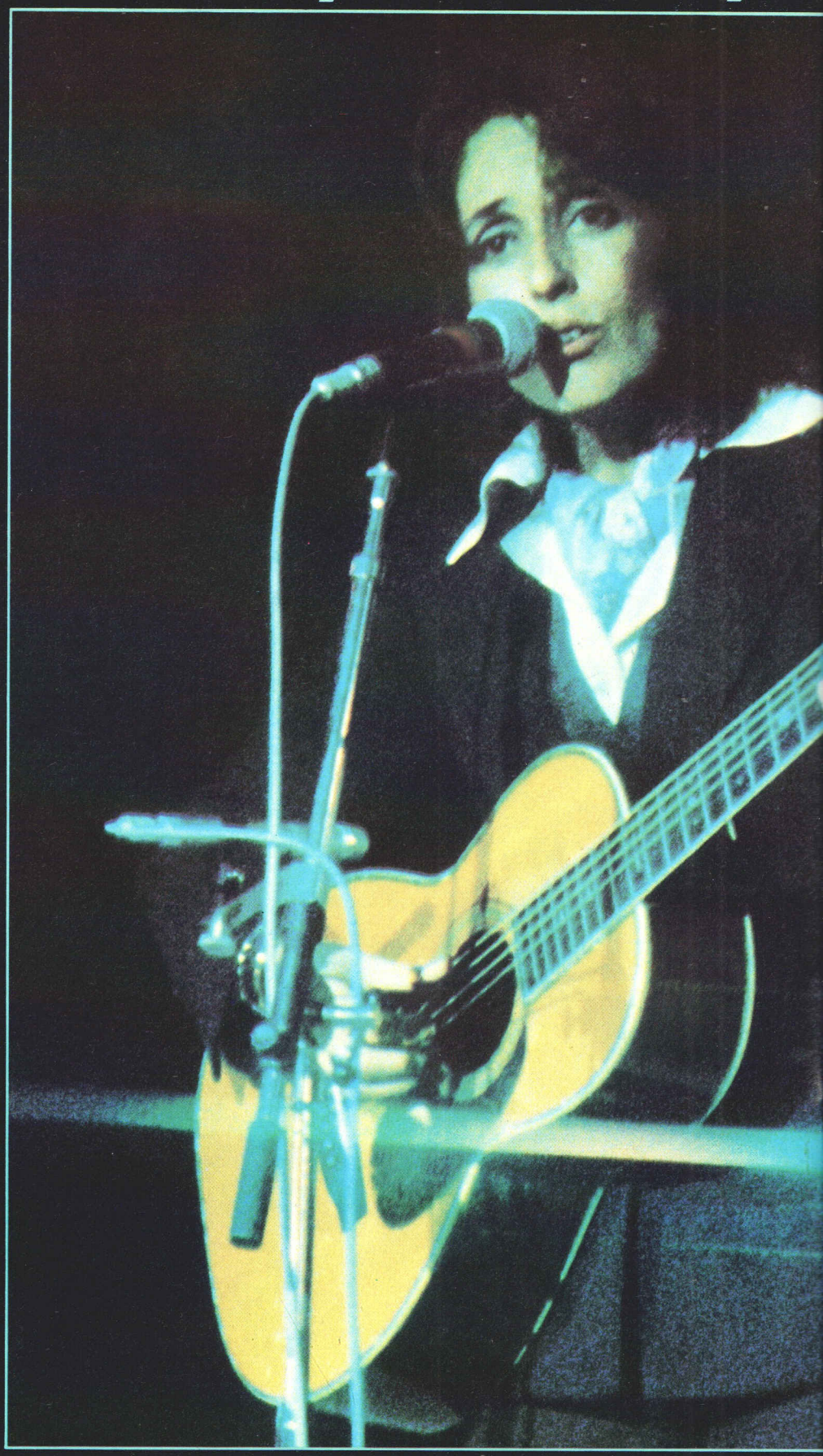
ROBERT SHELTON

The Kingston Trio
Recommended Listening

The Best Of The Kingston Trio (Capitol T1705) (Includes: Tom Dooley, The Tijuana Jail, Scotch And Soda, Bad Man Blunder, Raspberries Strawberries, Everglades, MTA, Where Have All The Flowers Gone, A Worried Man); *The Best Of The Kingston Trio Vol 2* (Capitol T2280) (Includes: Reverend Mr Black, Ally Ally Oxen Free, Greenback Dollar, Desert Pete, Sinking Of The Reuben James).

Sad-eyed Lady

Joan Baez sang folk ballads with a message



ON THE EVENING of Friday, 15 August 1969, Joan Baez was at the famous Woodstock Music Festival, waiting to perform before a crowd estimated at half a million. She slipped away from the backstage area with her guitar and walked to the 'free stage', which had been provided for those fans unable to see the main stage. There she played for 40 minutes in the rain, pointing to the wide-open countryside and the dozens of tents at the site and telling her enthusiastic audience, 'this is what we live for . . . It's why we're fighting together right now – for our right to be heard and the right to remain free.' It was only when her road manager came to tell her that she was due to play on the main stage that Joan Baez ceased her unscheduled performance. She was the only one of the many 'name' artists at Woodstock to take time out to visit the free stage.

This incident sums up what has become the dominant image of Joan Baez during a musical career of more than 20 years – the integrity of her commitment both to her audience and to her own beliefs. The origins of that commitment, as well as the roots of her singing style, lie in the atmosphere and the attitudes of the American folk revival of the late Fifties and early Sixties.

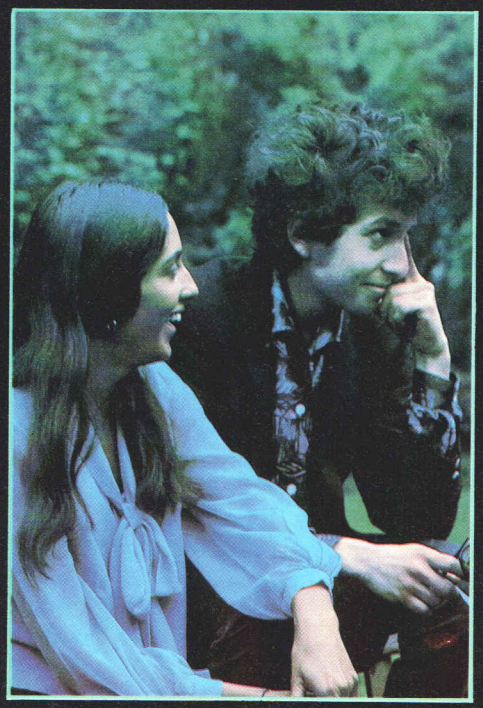
Voice of a generation

Joan Baez was born in New York on 9 January 1941, the second daughter of a mother of British descent and a Mexican-American father who was a teacher of physics and became a Quaker. Baez has sung of this family background in the title-song of her 1976 album, *Gulf Winds*. She was in her most formative teenage years when she came under the influence of folk music in the clubs and coffee-houses of Boston, where she briefly attended college.

It was a time when young white men and women all over America were turning to folk music in the same mood of idealism as they lent their support to the growing movement for civil rights among blacks in the Southern states. Joan Baez was soon recognised as an outstanding, if not *the* outstanding, member of a new generation of folk singers. The reason, quite simply, was the extraordinary quality of her voice.

In its 1962 cover story on Baez, *Time* magazine made a strenuous attempt to pin down the elusive character of her singing. 'Her voice,' it wrote, 'is as clear as air in the autumn, a vibrant, strong, untrained and thrilling soprano. It is haunted and plaintive, a mother's voice, and it has in it distant reminders of black women wailing in the night, of detached madrigal singers performing calmly at court, and of saddened gypsies trying to charm death into leaving their Spanish caves.'

The political beliefs of Joan Baez have suffused her life, not only in her stage performances but in actions such as visiting refugees in Indochina (above centre).



Baez and Dylan in the early Sixties (above) and on his 'Rolling Thunder' tour of 1975 (below right).

The variety of images thrown up by that one description serve to point out that the clarity and poise of the Baez voice did not derive from any single tradition of folk music. It was marked neither by the accents of the white sound of the Appalachians nor the black sound of Mississippi, nor even the sound of Spanish folk song. Instead, the voice seemed to embody 'folk' as a whole, its purity epitomising the anti-commercial attitudes which pervaded the folk revival.

Debut tracks

A single performance at the 1959 Newport Folk Festival before an audience of 13,000 was enough to make Joan Baez a star of the rapidly-growing revival. She was immediately approached by representatives of the record companies, anxious to capitalise on any possible new trend. 'Would you like to meet Mitch, baby?' asked one, referring to Mitch Miller, head of Columbia Records and an influential figure in the American record industry. 'Who's Mitch?' was Joan's reply. Shortly afterwards she signed a contract with Vanguard, a small folk label run by music enthusiasts for which she was to cut a dozen albums in as many years.

The first of those records, called simply *Joan Baez*, appeared in 1960. The choice of songs reflected the wide-ranging sources of the repertoire of the folk movement of the time. They included 'Wildwood Flower', a song from the Appalachian Mountains of Kentucky which had been made famous by early country singers, the Carter Family; the Negro spiritual 'All My Trials', and a very worldly song with black roots, 'House Of The Rising Sun'. This tragic tale of a New Orleans brothel later became a favourite with young white musicians, notably Bob Dylan and the Animals. The Joan Baez version was taken from the singing of Leadbelly (Huddie Ledbetter), the ex-convict who had been a leading figure on the folk scene during the Forties and Fifties.

As well as these varieties of American song, the first Joan Baez album drew on European and British music. There was a Spanish-language piece and the classic Scottish ballad, 'Mary Hamilton', which was the emotional high-point of the record. The song told the story of a lady-in-waiting at court, condemned to death for killing her illegitimate baby:

The queen she had four Marys,
Tonight there'll be just three.
There's Mary Beaton and Mary
Seton
And Mary Carmichael and me.

With a kernel of accuracy in its overstatement, *Time* magazine commented in 1962 that 'her most typical selections are so mournful and quietly desperate that her early records would not be out of place at a funeral'.

Steppin' out with Dylan

One important aspect of Joan Baez's early records was that they contained only *traditional* folk songs. In the arguments which raged among folk fans about the validity of compositions by contemporary songwriters, she appeared to be firmly on the side of the 'purists', those who argued that the only true folk songs were those that were anonymous and ancient. At the same time, Joan Baez was showing herself to be firmly involved in contemporary America, lending her support to the growing movement for civil rights for blacks, led by Dr Martin Luther King.

This apparent contradiction was emphasised by Bob Dylan in a conversation recalled by the singer Richard Farina, who married Joan's sister Mimi. 'Take Joanie, man,' said Dylan. 'She's still singin' about Mary Hamilton. I mean, where's that at? She's walked around on picket lines, she's got all kinds of feeling, so why ain't she steppin' out?'

When Joan Baez did 'step out' to include contemporary songs in her repertoire, it was because of Bob Dylan himself. Her fourth album, *In Concert Part 2*, included just one new song among the traditional ones – Dylan's 'Don't Think Twice It's All Right'. By this time, 1963, she had met Dylan and listened carefully to his compositions. It was the moment when Bob Dylan was being transformed from a cult hero into an international star; he was the sensation of the Newport Folk Festival, just as Joan had been four years earlier. Soon Joan was telling interviewers how impressed she was by his music: 'The majority of these "protest" songs are stupid,' she told jazz critic Nat Hentoff. 'They're without beauty. By contrast, there are Bob Dylan's songs. They're powerful as poetry and they're powerful as music. Most of the others are powerful as neither.'

Dylan and Baez became lovers; they began to appear in concert together and were acclaimed by the press as the King and Queen of folk music. For a while Baez was idolised as a superstar and rumours about her were rife: at various times she was said to be suffering from a mysterious paralysis, to be living with Marlon Brando on an Indian reservation, and to have been arrested at the Mexican border with a car load of drugs.

Faithful to the cause

By 1965 this heady phase was over. Folk and protest were out, replaced by the beat boom spearheaded by the Beatles. Bob Dylan's style shifted in response to the new music from the UK, but his move away from the folk world meant both a musical and personal break with Baez. He seemed to repudiate the political commitment of 'Blowin' In The Wind' and 'With God On Our Side', while she continued to proclaim hers in actions as well as words. From 1964, Baez withheld the proportion

of her taxes which would have gone on arms spending, and in 1965 she funded and set up the Institute for the Study of Non-Violence, in California.

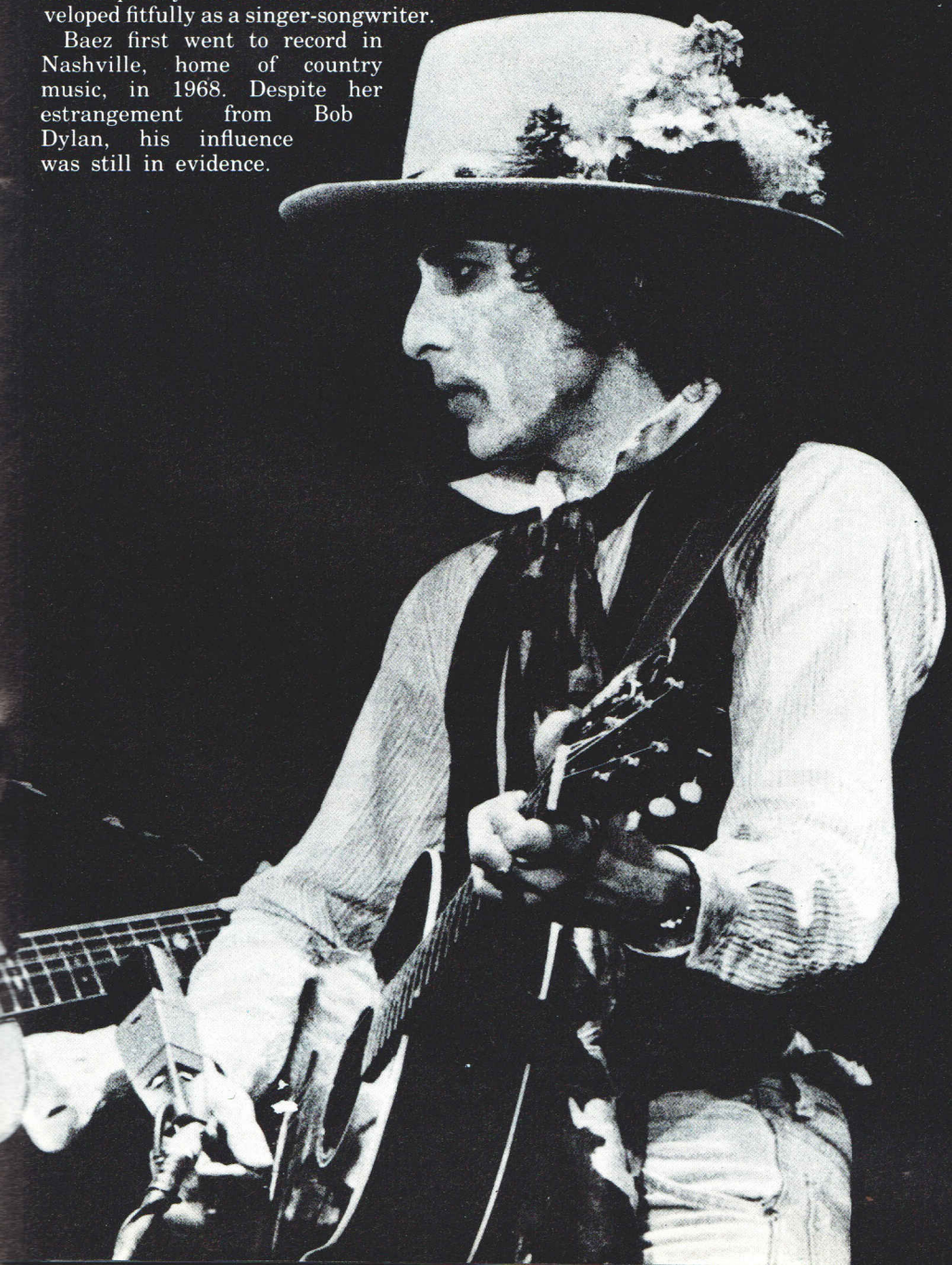
Since that time, Joan Baez has remained remarkably consistent in her involvement in radical causes. She was a prominent figure in the movement within America against the Vietnam War, visiting Hanoi at Christmas 1972 when that city was under attack from US bombers. The experience was used as the basis for her 1973 album, *Where Are You Now, My Son?* As a leading member of Amnesty International, she campaigned later in the decade for the release of political prisoners, notably in the Soviet Union.

Diamonds And Rust

The musical career of Joan Baez since 1965 has shown less consistency, however. Having abandoned the role of pure folk singer, she has moved in a number of other directions without ever quite finding a fully-successful new role. She has gone towards country music, towards contemporary rock ballads and has developed fitfully as a singer-songwriter.

Baez first went to record in Nashville, home of country music, in 1968. Despite her estrangement from Bob Dylan, his influence was still in evidence. Not only had he amazed his contemporaries by recording in Nashville himself the previous year, but the project Baez brought to the Tennessee music centre was a double-album of Dylan compositions, released as *Any Day Now*. The title was abstracted from Dylan's 'I Shall Be Released'.

Nashville was also a stronghold of support for the racist Governor George Wallace, who was running for President in 1968. When they heard Joan was coming, the session musicians put Wallace stickers all over their amps and the studio walls. But when she walked into the room, they quietly removed the stickers: it didn't seem funny any more. Nashville was also impressed with her musicianship. Producer Norbert Putnam later commented: 'Before we cut *Any Day Now*, I didn't know anything about her except that she was good at leading riots – but from the first moment she started singing in Columbia's studios, I think every musician in the room stood up and took notice of this girl. It was incredible.'



Joan Baez went on to cut five more albums in Nashville, including the 1972 release *One Day At A Time*, which still stands as her most effective political statement in music. As her earlier comment on 'protest' songs indicated, Joan was by no means a staunch devotee of message songs.

The songs on *Come From The Shadows* (another Nashville LP, released in 1972) contain a political dimension, but one that emerges from the skill of the writing, the passion of the melody line and the power of the singing. John Lennon's 'Imagine', included on this album and in virtually every Baez concert for the last decade, is the classic example of this type of song, but two of Joan's own compositions are of almost the same quality. 'Prison Trilogy' is a story song, with each vignette of convict life building to the chorus, 'We're gonna tear, gonna tear, those prisons down'. 'To Bobby' is a more characteristic Baez song, autobiographical in nature; the 'Bobby' of the title is, of course, Dylan.

'Diamonds And Rust', the title-song of what is possibly her best album (1975) is another letter to Dylan which succeeds through its choice of terse and memorable images. But too many of her later songs succumb to rather long-winded autobiographical reminiscences. *Diamonds And Rust* worked as an album because of its judicious mixture of standards, songs by such good contemporary writers as John Prine and Janis Ian and Baez herself.

During the Seventies the Baez career settled down to a pattern of an annual tour of America (and, occasionally, of Europe), with albums appearing less frequently. The routine was broken only by her reunion with Bob Dylan on his quirky Rolling Thunder tour of 1975, and by changes of record label, to A&M in 1972 and to Columbia in 1977.

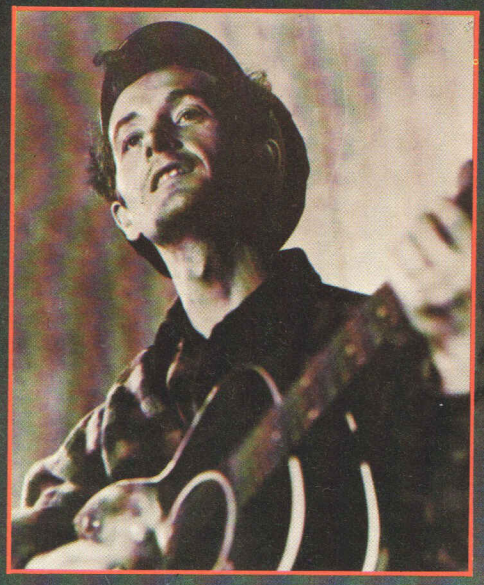
It has become customary to regard Baez as old-fashioned in the rock world of the Eighties, but she deserves credit for two very important achievements in a career of over two decades. She has provided a clear example of combining social commitment with participation in popular music; and she remains one of the most important exceptions to the rule that to make it in the male-dominated world of music, women must subordinate their initiative to those of managers and record producers. Joan Baez has always maintained her independence of thought and action, both as a musician and as a campaigner.

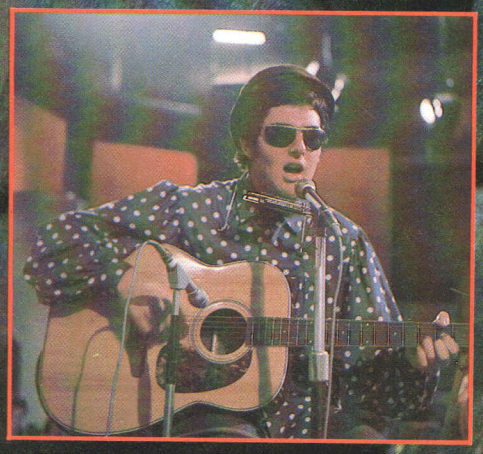
DAVE LAING

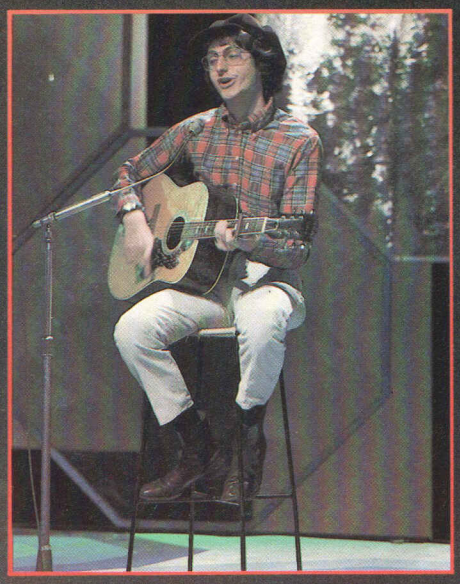
Joan Baez
Recommended Listening

Farewell Angelica (Vanguard VSD 79200) (Includes: Farewell Angelica, A Hard Rains A-Gonna Fall, Its All Over Now, Baby Blue, Colours); *Spotlight On Joan Baez* (Vanguard Spot 1008) (A double-album set which includes: We Shall Overcome, There But For Fortune, Donna Donna, Colours).

FOLK + ROCK + PROTEST = DOLLARS







How musical commitment became politics for profit

AMERICA'S MUSIC BUSINESS WEEKLY *Billboard* ran a front-page headline, in the summer of 1965, that read thus: 'Folk+Rock+Protest=Dollars'. For a few months at least, the equation rang true: in the protest craze, American pop had not only its most lucrative trend since the surf music boom but also its first proper response to the domination of the charts by British beat groups. That few of the new protest singers had any folk music connections hardly mattered: 'protest' was not so much a style or a movement as a contrived pop formula in which a pseudo-political message, gruff Dylanesque voice and a bohemian image all played equal parts.

Although he was no longer writing explicitly political songs by 1965, Bob Dylan was both the unwitting precursor of the protest craze and the model for its key performers. Popular recognition of his work has been growing since the early Sixties, when he emerged as the youngest, cleverest and most charismatic of the new breed of folk singer-songwriters. The 'protesting' nature of his songs (after Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and other upholders of the political folk tradition) was to a non-folk listener their most obvious attribute, although it was one of his more innocuous protest songs – 'Blowin' In The Wind' – that first brought him to the attention of the wider pop audience, when Peter, Paul and Mary's version reached Number 2 in the US charts in 1963.

While his reputation grew and his albums for Columbia sold in numbers quite unprecedented for a folk artist, Dylan remained a figure peripheral to rock; the turning point came with his first openly rock-influenced album, *Bringing It All Back Home,* in early 1965. With that album came mass acceptance and, after the commercial possibilities of folk-rock fusion were further demonstrated by the Byrds' influential version of Dylan's 'Mr Tambourine Man', the commercialisation of the new style began with a vengeance.

To most recording managers, label heads and pop entrepreneurs, 'folk-rock' was indistinguishable from protest. Adding a folk element to the rock sound meant using the lyric to make a social or political statement – or so the commercial thinking went. That this amounted to a misrepresentation of what Dylan was trying to achieve proved irrelevant: careful examination of the material on *Bringing It All Back Home* (and on the more folk-influenced *Another Side of Bob Dylan* that preceded it) revealed a notable broadening of the kind of socially-committed songs on which he had built his following. But it was Dylan's voice, his vitriolic attitude towards those around him and the angry mood that pervaded even his most personal lyrics that his imitators most sought to capture.

Hat Power. Woody Guthrie (inset top left) wore one, as did Bob Dylan (inset bottom right). He was in turn copied by Donovan (centre), Jonathan King (inset top right) and P. F. Sloan (inset bottom left).

'Like A Rolling Stone', his first major US singles success in August 1965, and the awesomely bitter follow-up, 'Positively Fourth Street', were as influential for the savagery of Dylan's delivery as for the cynicism of their content. In a year of growing opposition to the Vietnam War and campus unrest, Dylan seemed to many to not only speak for but actually *represent* a discontented and dissatisfied generation, even in his less obviously political songs. In launching the protest fad, the music industry turned discontent into a marketing gimmick.

West Coast response

The marketing of 'protest' began on America's West Coast, where record companies had long had a reputation for creating and then milking dry the most ephemeral of pop trends. The prime architects of California protest were seasoned professionals, veterans of Phil Spector and Snuff Garrett sessions, whose pursuit of commerciality and dedication to the tricks of record production offered a sharp contrast to the cheerfully amateur, determinedly anti-commercial approach of the small-time entrepreneurs who ran the Greenwich Village folk scene. The Byrds' 'Mr Tambourine Man' was itself an ingenious West Coast production that made full use of the famous Hollywood session crew, including Leon Russell, Hal Blaine and Larry Knechtel.

The man who took most of the credit (or blame) for starting the protest bandwagon rolling was Lou Adler, one-time manager of Jan and Dean and a former songwriting partner of Herb Alpert. He had worked in New York for Don Kirshner's Aldon Music and had moved to Los Angeles in 1960 to set up the small Colpix label for the Screen Gems-Columbia movie corporation.

In 1964, he launched his own publishing-cum-production company, Dunhill Productions, supplying local acts with songs written in whichever style was current, and a short while after he started his own record label, Dunhill. A typically shrewd West Coast pop operator, his introduction to Dylan came via *Bringing It All Back Home* – the first Dylan album to use rock accompaniment – in which he immediately saw possibilities. Staff songwriter Phil (P. F.) Sloan was given the album to mull over, as Adler later recalled in a *Melody Maker* interview:

'This is strange, but it's really true: I gave Phil Sloan a pair of boots and a hat and a copy of the Dylan album, and a week later he came back with ten songs, including "Eve Of Destruction". It was a natural feel for him – he's a great mimic. Anyway I was afraid of the song, I didn't know if we could get it played. But the next night I went to Ciro's, where the

Byrds were playing. It was the beginning of the freak period ... the place was jam-packed, spilling out on to the street. In the middle of it was this guy in furs, with long hair, and dancing; I thought he looked like a leader of a movement. Terry Melcher told me that he was Barry McGuire, and that he'd sung with the New Christy Minstrels. A week later we cut the record and it sold six million.'

'Eve Of Destruction' was little more than an unsubtle, awkwardly constructed barrage of complaints against authority. It had just the kind of all-purpose protest lyric – it targets included everything from segregation to the Bomb, from China to religion – to send shudders through the US radio networks and inspire irate letters to newspapers. Many stations banned the disc on the strength of its publicity material alone, which depicted McGuire climbing out of a nuclear fall-out shelter. Against a background of such carefully stage-managed controversy, the record could hardly fail and 'Eve Of Destruction' duly reached Number 1 in the Hot Hundred during September 1965.

Generation-gap genius

In the same month that 'Eve Of Destruction' was released, another West Coast act appeared with a song that appealingly protested against parental discipline and society's expectations. Sonny and Cher's 'I Got You Babe' was greeted as a protest record on the strength of both its mildly complaining lyric and the bohemian image of its singers. Although Sonny himself was over 30 and his chief claim to fame was as composer (with Jack Nitszche) of the Searchers and Jackie DeShannon hit, 'Needles And Pins', the pair were marketed by the Atco label as the personification of hip, modern, fun-seeking youth – the harmless face of the protest boom. All they ever 'protested' about was the generation gap, in terms that were calculated to please even the most virulently anti-pop parent.

Sonny (real name Salvatore Bono) was already a veteran of the Los Angeles recording scene, his involvement stretching back to a spell as staff producer with Specialty and numerous sessions as backing musician, arranger or producer while Cher (real name Cherilyn LaPier) was an experienced session singer. The Spector-like Sonny and Cher sound, perfected on 'I Got You Babe' and faithfully re-created on subsequent hits like 'All I Really Want To Do', 'Little Man' and 'The Beat Goes On', was generally attributed to the production 'genius' of Sonny Bono himself, but much of the credit was due to former Specialty arranger Harold Battiste, who supervised all the duo's sessions.

In their oversize sheepskin coats, fancy striped trousers, flowery shirts and pointed boots, Sonny and Cher passed briefly for Greenwich Village refugees. Within a few months of 'I Got You Babe' and Sonny's one solo hit, 'Laugh At Me', they were already modifying their image for television and night-club appearances and recording songs that had nothing to do with folk, such as 'Bang Bang' (a solo hit for Cher) and 'What Now My Love'.

In time, Sonny settled more into a background role, running the couple's business affairs and producing and writing for Cher. What didn't change as long as they performed together was their public image as besotted, inseparable lovers, the Nelson Eddy and Jeanette Macdonald of their day: their on-stage hand-holding, fondling and dewey-eyed love talk became an essential feature of their popular early Seventies television show. After a brief chart comeback with 'All I Ever Need Is You' in 1972, they separated two years later.

By the late summer of 1965, protest pop had reached Britain, where Cambridge undergraduate Jonathan King wrote and recorded a meaningless slice of social comment called 'Everyone's Gone To The Moon' – a Number 4 hit in the UK and a

In 1965, 'protest' became a general term covering a broad set of ideals. It ranged from the soupy romanticism of Sonny and Cher (below) through the facile anti-war lyrics of Hedgehoppers Anonymous (below right) to the introspective musings of Bob Lind (bottom right).

Number 17 in the US Hot Hundred. Donovan emerged on ITV's 'Ready Steady Go' in that same year as a Dylan copyist, although he fast developed his own rather fey style of vaguely mystical folk-rock. Manfred Mann rocked Dylan's 'With God On Our Side', 'If You Gotta Go, Go Now' and 'Just Like A Woman', and Dylan himself voiced approval.

The Animals, whose version of 'House Of The Rising Sun' was partly responsible for turning Dylan on to rock in 1964, were greeted initially in the US as a folk-rock band, and they continued to make the charts with tough, committed songs like 'We've Gotta Get Out Of This Place' and 'It's My Life'. Indeed, British R&B was regarded in America as having an 'authenticity', a credibility, that American protest pop lacked. Much was made of the working-class origins of singers like Eric Burdon, who were assumed to have experienced the poverty and hardship from which America's middle-class intellectual 'folkniks' were insulated.

The craze produced innumerable oddities. Jonathan King moved quickly from performing to independent record production, writing and producing a sarcastic anti-war song called 'It's Good News Week' for Hedgehoppers Anonymous, who happened to be RAF ground staff. To counteract what his superiors probably believed was the communist propaganda in the pop charts, Sergeant Barry Sadler of the US Air Force made a pro-Vietnam War record entitled 'Ballad Of The Green Berets' – and, amid much puzzlement as to just what America's record-buying youth *did* think about the war, it reached Number 1. He quickly became a one-man propaganda machine – his bookings were handled by a specially-appointed lieutenant colonel – and his debut LP (which, like the single, sold more than a million copies) included tracks with such titles as 'Saigon', 'Salute To The Nurses', 'Letter From Vietnam' and 'The Soldier Has Come Home'.

Golden 'Silence'

The twin expansion of protest and folk-rock also prompted record companies to scour their back catalogues for suitable re-issues. Late in 1965, an executive at Columbia in New York remembered some tapes that an unknown folk duo called Simon and Garfunkel had made for the company; they were resurrected, the best song – 'The Sound Of Silence' – was chosen for release and a gentle rock accompaniment was added to it by producer Tom Wilson. The result was a US Number 1, the first for a duo who were one of the few folk-rock acts of the 1965-66 period to make a lasting impact.

'The Sound Of Silence', though a protest song in only the very broadest sense, typified the more poetic strain of mid-Sixties folk-rock and, as the protest craze receded, more complex lyrics became a new feature of the folk-rock movement. Dylan's influence was again crucial, as he was about to enter his semi-mystical *Blonde On Blonde* period, but once more his imitators fell short of his command of language and imagery.

Bob Lind, for instance, was acclaimed as a 'folk-poet' when his 'Elusive Butterfly' entered the American charts in February 1966. This song was a perfectly constructed, flowing stream of images that Richard Goldstein in *The Poetry Of Rock* described as 'good enough to be read aloud at graduation ceremonies', but subsequent releases delighted too much in their own obscurity and Lind quickly faded from the scene.

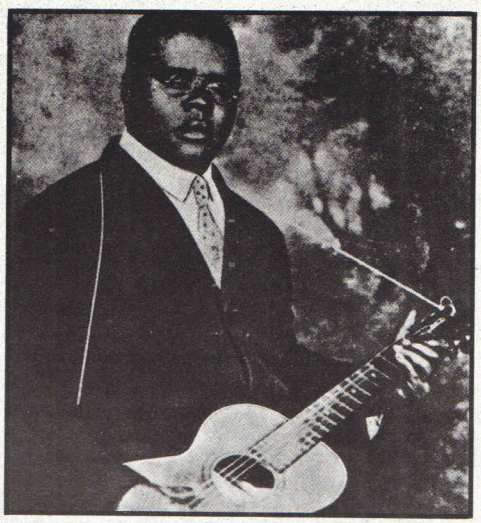
Protest was too much a product of 1965 – and the year's peculiar mix of campus politics, expanding commercial horizons and growing social awareness – to endure for long. As writers at the time pointed out, protest of some kind had always been a feature of pop since the early days of rock'n'roll – what were Eddie Cochran's 'Summertime Blues' and Fats Domino's 'Blue Monday' if not songs of complaint? – and there was no reason to presume that political music should always be identified with folk.

In time, folk-rock developed its own identity through the music of the Byrds, the Lovin' Spoonful, the Mamas and Papas, Tim Hardin, Simon and Garfunkel, Eric Andersen and others, in a manner that did not encompass political content of any explicit kind. Mainstream rock, however, did incorporate more than an element of protest, as the savage social criticism of the Rolling Stones' 'Satisfaction', the Kinks' 'Well Respected Man', and the Who's 'My Generation' showed. To what extent artists like Barry McGuire, Sonny and Cher, Donovan and the rest contributed to this remains debatable, for theirs was simply a commercial response to changes initiated by Bob Dylan.

STEPHEN BARNARD

Barry McGuire (above right) had great success in September 1965 with P. F. Sloan's 'Eve of Destruction'. Publicity material included pictures of the singer emerging from a fall-out shelter (right).

FROM COTTON FIELD TO COFFEE BAR



The importance of black music to white students

'UP AGAINST THE WALL, motherfucker!' sang Jefferson Airplane in 1968, appalling suburban America and delighting the freaks. To some, it may have seemed paradoxical as well as frightening, this deliberate adoption of a revolutionary cry from the burning Negro ghettoes. But it was in fact the logical result of a long attachment among young whites to the political aspirations voiced by American blacks.

The song was the culmination, too, of a musical attachment to the blues – a link that had its immediate roots in the white folk music boom of the late Fifties and early Sixties. Without the contact of those years between the blues and folk, rock music would not have arrived at its brief, frenzied, post-hippie addiction to dreams of violent revolution, nor achieved its maturity as a musical form.

This peculiarly urban conjunction of blues and folk music originated, in fact, deep in the boondocks of America: in the Mississippi delta, the back roads of Georgia, the Texas panhandle and the Louisiana swamps – places where the rural blues styles still flourished, untouched by urban panic. Into such places in the Thirties and Forties wandered folk-song collector John A. Lomax and his son Alan, bringing back for the US Library of Congress some astonishing recordings of field hollers, prison songs and material by such giants of American music as Huddie Ledbetter, better known as Leadbelly. Another discovery was the master of the bottleneck guitar, Fred McDowell.

Meanwhile, fellow folklorist Samuel B. Charters was recording such classic exponents of black American folksong as Gus Cannon and the Memphis Jug Band. ('I'm the oldest banjo player in the South,' said Gus. 'Some o' them older ones is catchin' up wi' me, but I'm still the oldest!')

The Lomaxes helped launch some of these performers on commercial careers,

Top right: Blind Lemon Jefferson inspired bluesmen like Jesse Fuller (right) and Fred McDowell (below), who in turn passed on their music to the white folkies of the Sixties.

but perhaps more potent was the influence they had on a small, specialist white audience who heard their field recordings and became the nucleus of the urban folk music revival in the late Fifties. This audience was also becoming aware of the recordings of itinerant blues singers: Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Jesse Fuller and John Lee Hooker among them, as well as long-dead geniuses such as Robert Johnson. All these were to exercise an influence on the young white folk singers who emerged from (and played to) this audience.

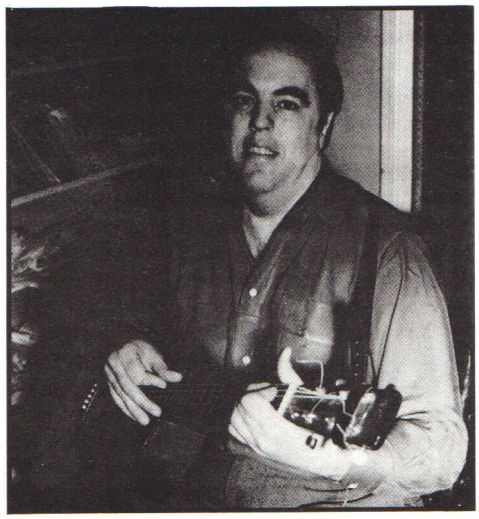
Romantics and rebels

What brought about the popular awareness of these musicians – black or white – was not so much their intrinsic talent (real though that was) as their symbolic political value. To young whites, the vision of Camelot offered by John F. Kennedy and the increasingly visible civil rights campaign led by the Reverend Martin Luther King both answered a vague dissatisfaction with an affluent but insecure world – one, furthermore, in which they felt peculiarly powerless. It was easy to identify with the struggling, non-violent American black after the scare of the Cuban missile crisis.

And it was also perhaps inevitable that the more articulate of this generation should find themselves drawn towards the folk music revival, which centred on coffee houses and clubs in the cities and on college campuses all over the United States. For here was an idiom and an outlook that precisely matched the mixture of romantic idealism and rebelliousness they felt.

The American folk music scene had long been something of a paradox, encompassing both a reverence for the country's most ancient musical traditions and an espousal of its most radical political sentiments. The United States could still boast a living transmission of great tragic ballads that had long since died out in their birthplace in Britain. But in the same clubs and bars where they were sung, the tradition of political song was kept alive: its heroes were still the Wobblies (members of the revolutionary socialist union, the Industrial Workers of the World) and their leader Joe Hill; Woody Guthrie, veteran of the Oklahoma dustbowl; and such practising working-class singers as the heroic and indomitable Sarah Ogan Gunning ('I hate the company bosses').

It was a powerful combination, deeply rooted in a populist myth of America and its irrepressible working people, its individualism, its unfulfilled but still boundless promise. Its centre was the backwoods of America, for rural America was somehow more real than the sprawling public squalor of the great industrial cities of the present (which were, perhaps, only too real). But such sentiments could scarcely fail to embrace the black campaign for political recognition, wheeling towards confrontation in the rural Deep South.



Top: Folk historian Alan Lomax. Above: Martin Luther King's message stirred white as well as black youth. Below: The music of Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee also crossed racial barriers.

And in the wake of that came a sudden upsurge of interest in rural black music.

There was, in any case, a fundamental affinity between the dream of Martin Luther King and the vision of America held by the folk hero Woody Guthrie. Guthrie had a passion for the American people and soil. 'This land is your land, this land is my land,' sang Guthrie; and for King, too, America was a garden that could yet become Eden once again. To young whites, there seemed little to choose between the wanderings through Depression America of Guthrie or Blind Lemon Jefferson; and nothing to choose between their understanding of suffering or the art with which they sustained themselves.

Blacks, whites and blues

So it was that white folk singers became also singers of the blues – and singers of protest songs as well as of the great stoic tales of suffering and death from the English tradition. And so it was, too, that white college kids ignored the oppression and the ghettoes in the industrial North, and flooded into Mississippi and Alabama in the summers of 1963 and 1964 to help enroll the black vote. They faced the Dobermanns and clubs of the local sheriffs, abuse and bigotry from the local populace. Many white students were beaten; some were even killed.

The significance of this meeting of black and white was, in the history of rock, twofold. It re-established the blues as a natural idiom of *white* American music, and influenced the poetry of rock to come.

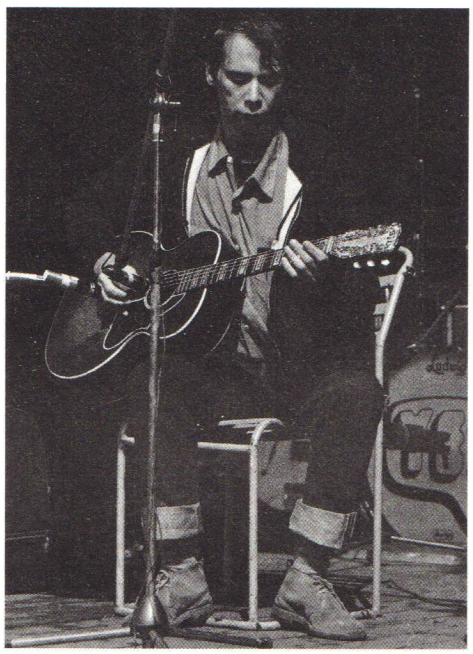
From the rural blues, white musicians discovered the technique of slide or bottleneck guitar playing. The influence of Robert Johnson, through his recordings in the Thirties, was perhaps paramount in this regard, though anyone lucky enough to hear Fred McDowell in person would have discovered that it was possible to extend and expand the blues into startling, almost entrancing melodic forms: Alan Lomax's recording of McDowell's 'Soon One Morning' is one of the most astonishing of the blues performances caught for posterity.

John Fahey was certainly the most inventive of the white guitarists in the style, though he was overshadowed by the more direct appeal (to a vast established public) of the playing of Keith Richard and Brian Jones. And Johnson's songs rapidly found their way into the rock repertoire, from the Stones' 'Love In Vain' to Cream's marvellously flowing, sensuous rendition of 'From Four Until Late'.

Sundry bluesmen – Blind Boy Fuller, Sleepy John Estes, John Lee Hooker and to some extent Lightnin' Hopkins among them – preferred a more primitive, droning guitar accompaniment to their singing, which was itself a basic, field-holler-like pentatonic utterance. The singer who found this style most inspiring seems to have been Bob Dylan (who at one recording session in London wittily called himself 'Blind Boy Grunt'). But Dylan – who was, as his first album showed, a much more accomplished guitar player than he generally revealed – turned the technique to brilliant use in such songs as 'The Ballad Of Hollis Brown', a relentless 12 bar with an obsessional G-drone.

Dylan's debt to the blues is enormous, but two of his songs from this period demonstrate clearly the appeal they had for the new urban audience: the traditional 'In My Time Of Dyin'', essentially a gospel song turned into an anguished bottleneck blues by Dylan, and Blind Lemon Jefferson's 'See That My Grave Is Kept Clean'. Both reflect Sixties adolescents' fixation with death – though to them it was an obsession born not of generations of suffering, malnutrition and abuse, but out of what was regarded as chaotic local politics and the unearthly shadow of nuclear confrontation. Hence, the emotional worlds of black and white seemed strangely congruent, however different the forces of oppression.

Below: John Fahey, one of the most inventive white bluesmen. Bottom: An integrated protest for civil rights.



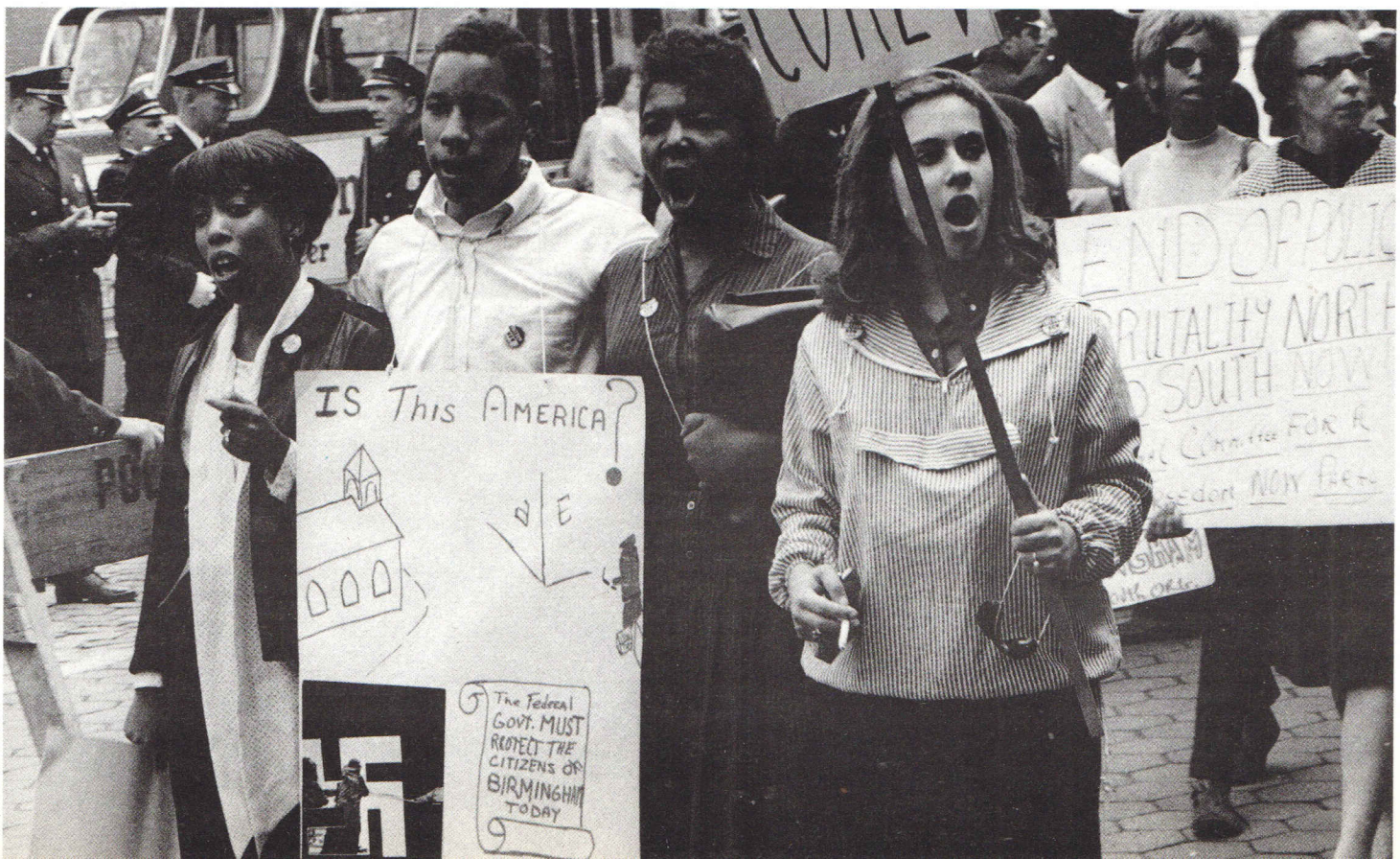
'The sun's gonna shine'

In such a dislocated existence the poetry of the blues seemed both perfectly appropriate and a monument to the survival of the human spirit. For the striking images of the blues are themselves dislocated, yet by their very disparity they jolt together the world and the mind of man in a creative unity: 'She puts her arms around me like a circle round the sun'; 'My mind got to wand'rin' like wild geese in the west'; 'The sun's gonna shine on my back door someday.'

Humour was an important ingredient, both exposing the truth and granting consolation, as in Bogus Ben Covington's dry-eyed comment on the comforts of religion, 'I heard the voice of a pork chop say "Come unto me and rest"'; and black people had long ago learned, for safety's sake, to speak in code in the presence of the white folks, especially about sex: 'If you don't like my potatoes, Daddy, why you dig so deep?' is a classic line, while 'Taxes on my pole' puns volumes about the emasculation felt by Southern blacks.

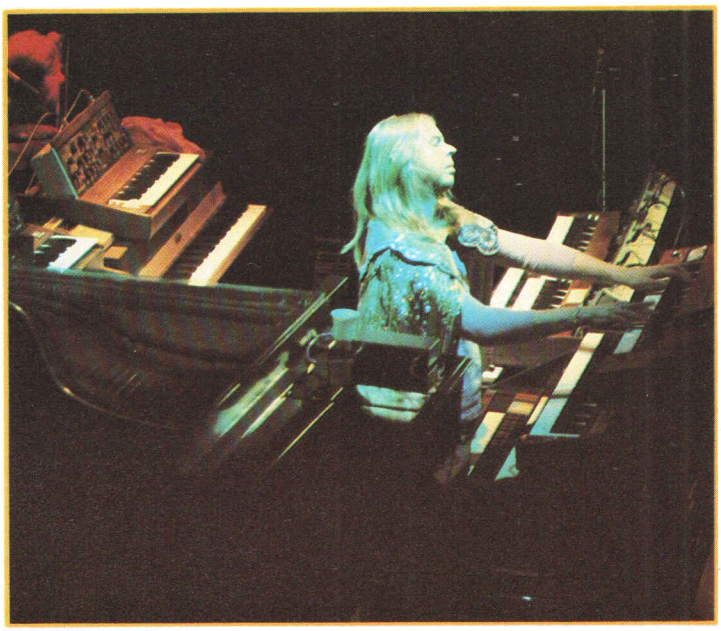
A generation of white songwriters absorbed a view of the world from such flashes of poetry: it is worth recalling that the Grateful Dead, one of the most surreal acid bands in their time, started life as Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions late in 1963 – and on many occasions in the preceding years, singers such as Judy Collins, Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs and Joan Baez would share the bill at Gerde's Folk City in Greenwich Village with John Lee Hooker, Jesse Fuller and Big Joe Williams. From this contact came more than protest songs and self-congratulatory choruses of 'We Shall Overcome': the whole history of rock music was soon to be visibly, and radically, altered.

PETER BROOKESMITH



THE GREAT MUSICIANS

Rick Wakeman



Above: Rick Wakeman is pictured amidst the banks of keyboards that constituted his stage equipment with the English Rock Ensemble, the group he led in the mid Seventies. Overleaf: The 'caped crusader' of rock at the synthesiser.

To many, the name Rick Wakeman summons up the picture of an almost ethereal being, with long golden hair, cocooned in a sparkling cape and surrounded by banks of electronic keyboard instruments. This image of 'norse god meets hi-tec' was cultivated by Wakeman during the Seventies, when his fortunes were in the ascendant; but beneath this somewhat shallow cosmetic lay a major force in the world of progressive rock.

Wakeman started playing keyboards at the age of four, encouraged by his pianist father who had worked with most of the top Forties and Fifties big bands. Rick's youthful ambition was to become a concert pianist, and at 16 he gained a place at the Royal College of Music where he studied both piano and church organ. While there, a chance meeting with producers Tony Visconti and Gus Dudgeon led to Wakeman's infiltration of the 'closed-shop' world of the session musician.

For over two years Wakeman worked the session market (he reckons to have done over 3000 sessions in that period), backing a variety of top-name artists. His credits included two of David Bowie's early albums, *Space Oddity* (1969) and *Hunky Dory* (1971), but probably the most memorable example of his work can be heard on Cat Stevens' 'Morning Has Broken'. Wakeman's fluent piano work dominates the recording behind Stevens' plaintive vocal, and the elaborate character of the piano on this recording echoes its way through most of Wakeman's later work.

While involved in his session duties, Wakeman met up with Dave Cousins at a BBC recording. The two got on particularly well together and, for the next 16 months, until July 1971, Wakeman was to become an important element in Cousins' band, the Strawbs. Originally a folk-orientated group, the Strawbs were influenced by Wakeman's powerful approach and were soon to evolve a far more electric sound. Wakeman was at his best on the Strawbs' *From The Witchwood* album, and his percussive, strident organ solo on 'Sheep' from that album is another prime example of a Wakeman style which is always part of his music.

When Wakeman joined Yes in August 1971, he took advantage of technological innovations to add two Moog synthesisers to his Hammond organ, Rhodes piano and acoustic grand. He also started to utilise a remarkable instrument known as a Mellotron which actually replayed pre-recorded tapes of other instruments, each key having its own associated tape playback head. The Mellotron made it possible to produce orchestral simulations from a single instrument.

Wakeman's success with Yes is well-known: he was with them for three years, and this period was to be most creative. *Fragile* (1971), *Close To The Edge* (1972) and *Yessongs* (1973) showed off Wakeman's other talents to the full. In Yes, Wakeman was lucky in finding other musicians who shared his grandiose conceptions for the future path of progressive rock. From a musical point of view, Wakeman's best contribution to Yes was probably the side-long title track from *Close To The Edge*. Making full use of a massive battery of keyboards, he was able to create the atmospheric moods of this multi-sectioned piece, as well as making sizeable lead contributions of his own, most notably the 'church organ' introduction to 'I Get Up I Get Down' and the lightning-fast runs on 'Seasons Of Man'.

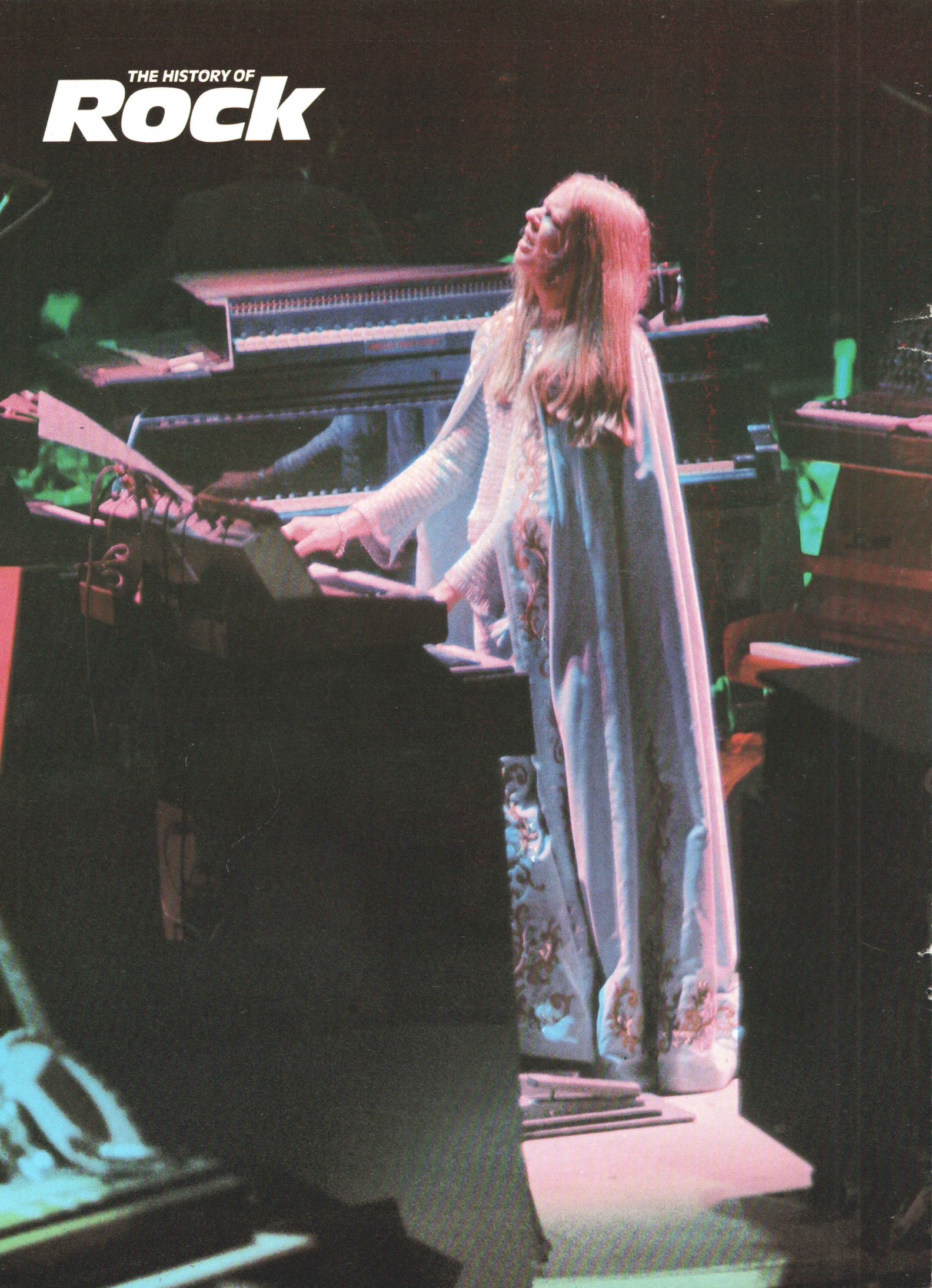
During his time with Yes he was regularly receiving such accolades as 'top keyboard player' in the rock press readers' polls. His only rival for these titles was Keith Emerson, but although these two men were both keyboard virtuosi their actual playing styles were quite different. Both players utilised the classics, though Wakeman's approach was to adopt the traditional style of the classical performer and use it to embellish original works; on the other hand Emerson would take sections from classical pieces and rework them in the rock idiom.

Yes had their ups and downs, both musical and personality-wise, and it was the criticism occasioned by *Tales From Topographic Oceans* (1974) that was to cause Wakeman's split with the band. By this time Wakeman had already released his first solo album, *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII*, which had been a considerable commercial success. This album relied greatly on electric and electronic keyboards, and has since become something of a reference work for the use of synthesisers in rock.

On leaving Yes, Rick started touring with his own band. He found that he was having to take over 14 different keyboard instruments on stage in order to recreate his album sounds. These included four Minimoogs, a double Mellotron (Mark 5), Fender Rhodes, Hohner Clavinet (D6), Hammond C-3, a Steinway grand, an RMI electronic piano and a Goff electric harpsichord. This was one of the largest keyboard rigs ever toured.

Wakeman continued to turn out concept albums; his second was *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* (1974), which was followed in turn by *The Myths And Legends Of King Arthur*. He returned to the Yes fold in 1976 to work on a couple of albums with the group, but the old magic was not as strong as before. At the end of 1979 a short-haired and clean-cut Rick Wakeman became his own boss again and produced *Rhapsodies* (1980), and *1984* (1981). Neither album took the world by storm, but the fact remains that Rick Wakeman is rightly acknowledged as an exceptionally gifted musician in the field of rock music.

DAVE CROMBIE

THE HISTORY OF

ROCK